A CentaUr's Life

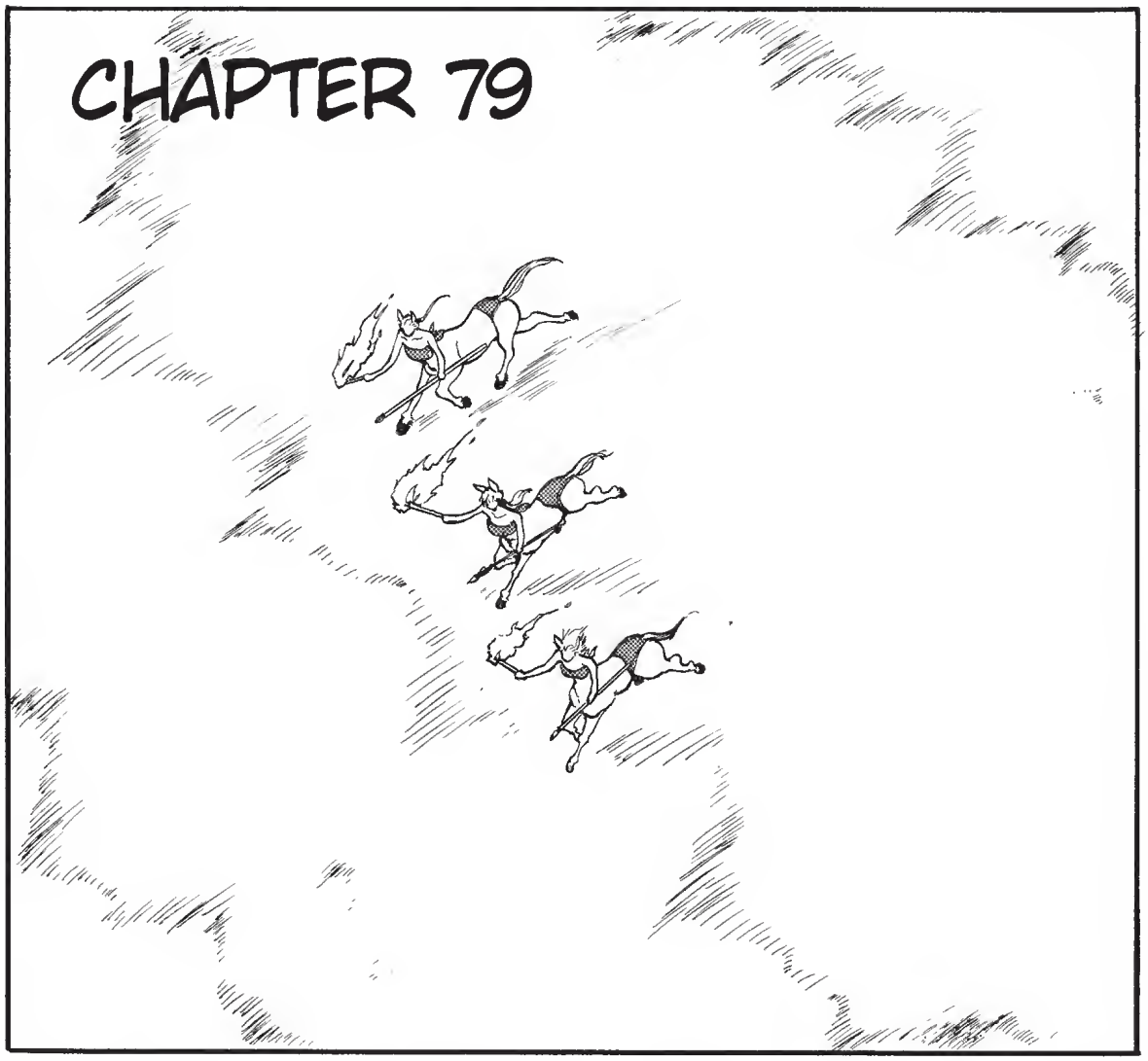
story & art

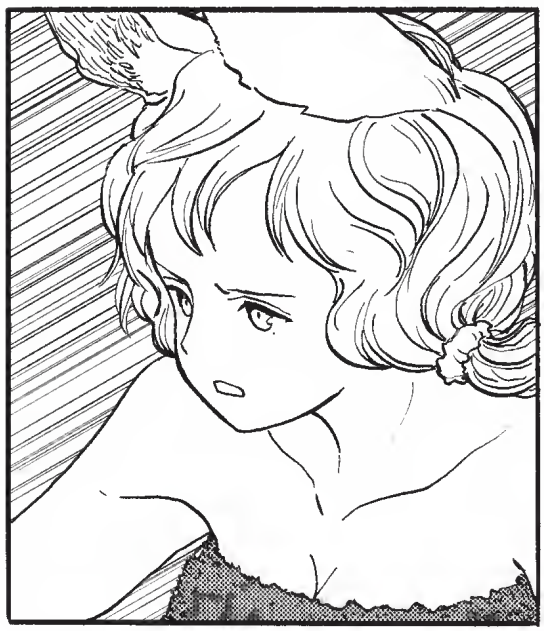
KEI MURAYAMA

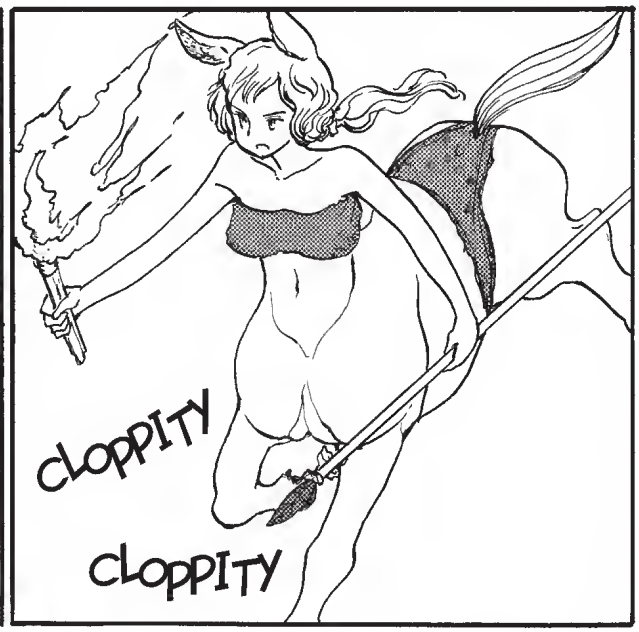
12

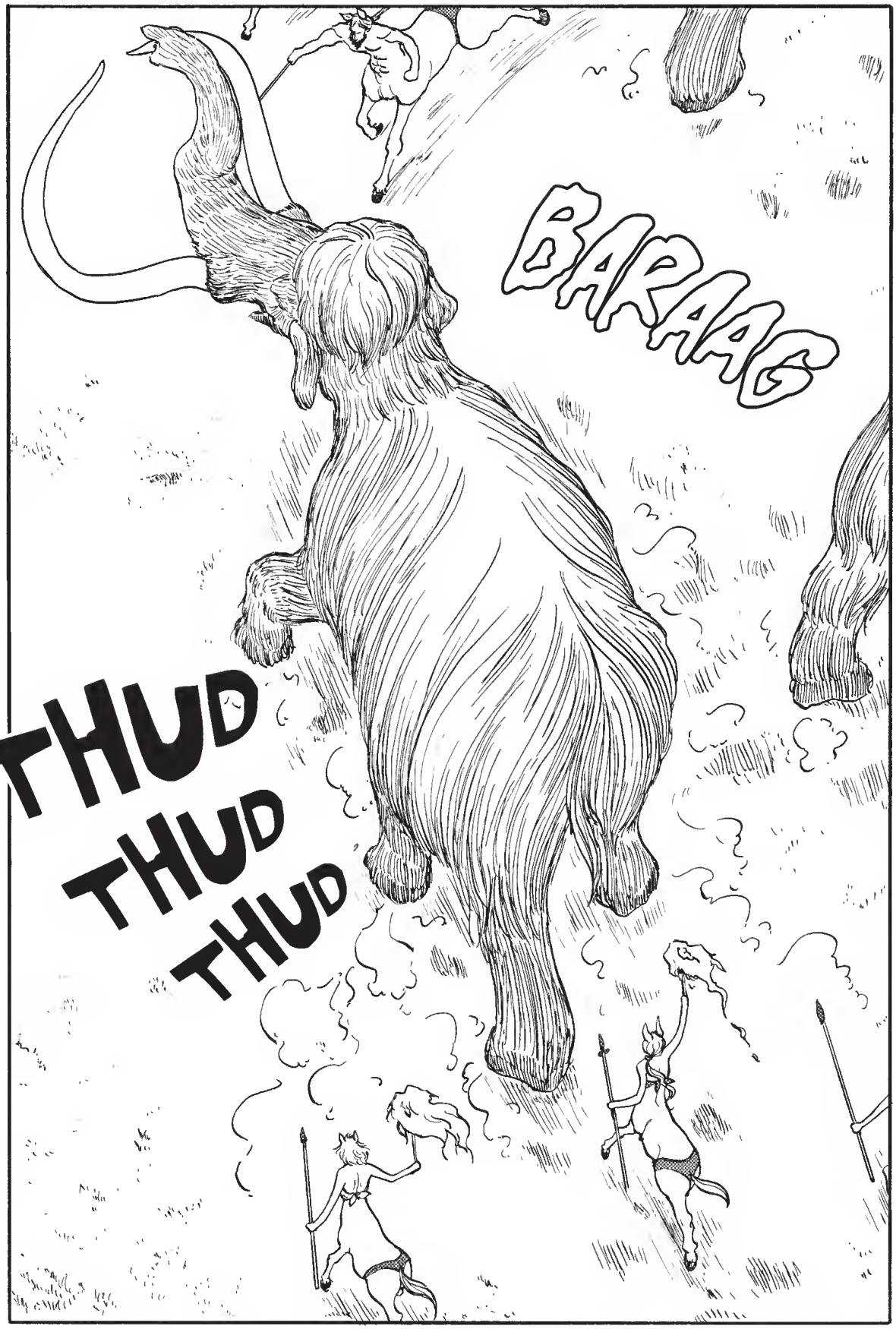
12
A CentaUr's Life
PRESENTED BY
KEI
MURAYAMA

CHAPTER 79

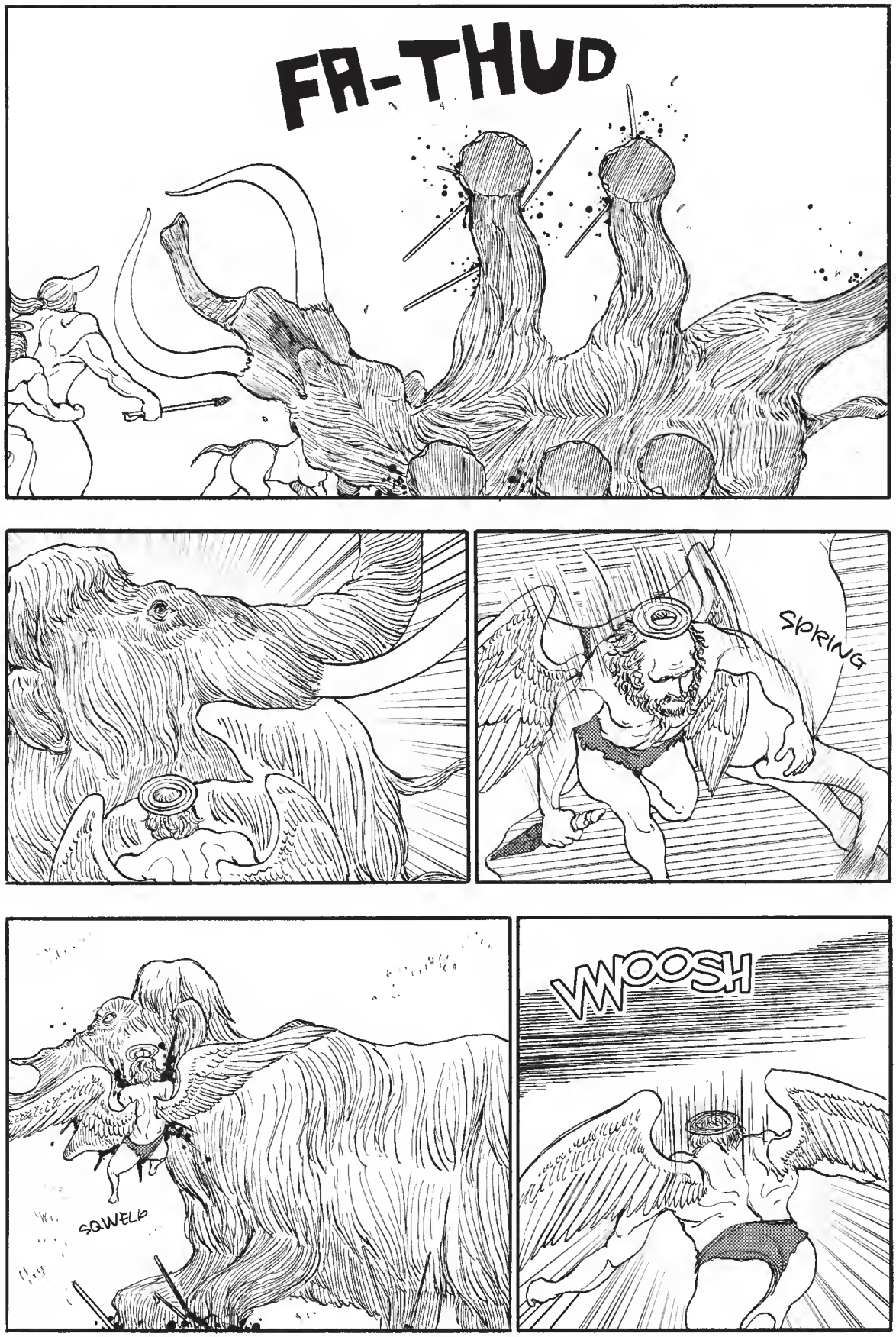




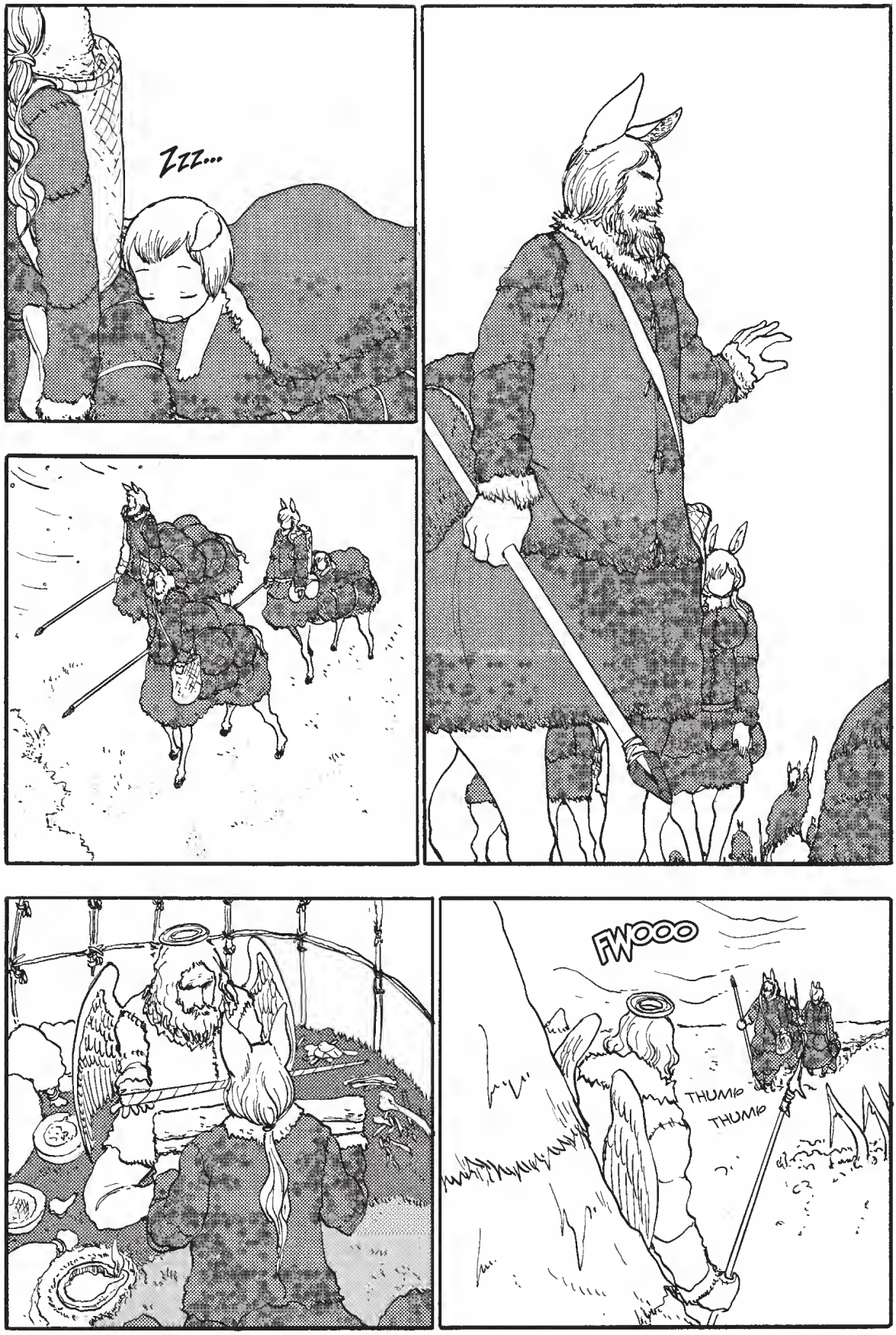


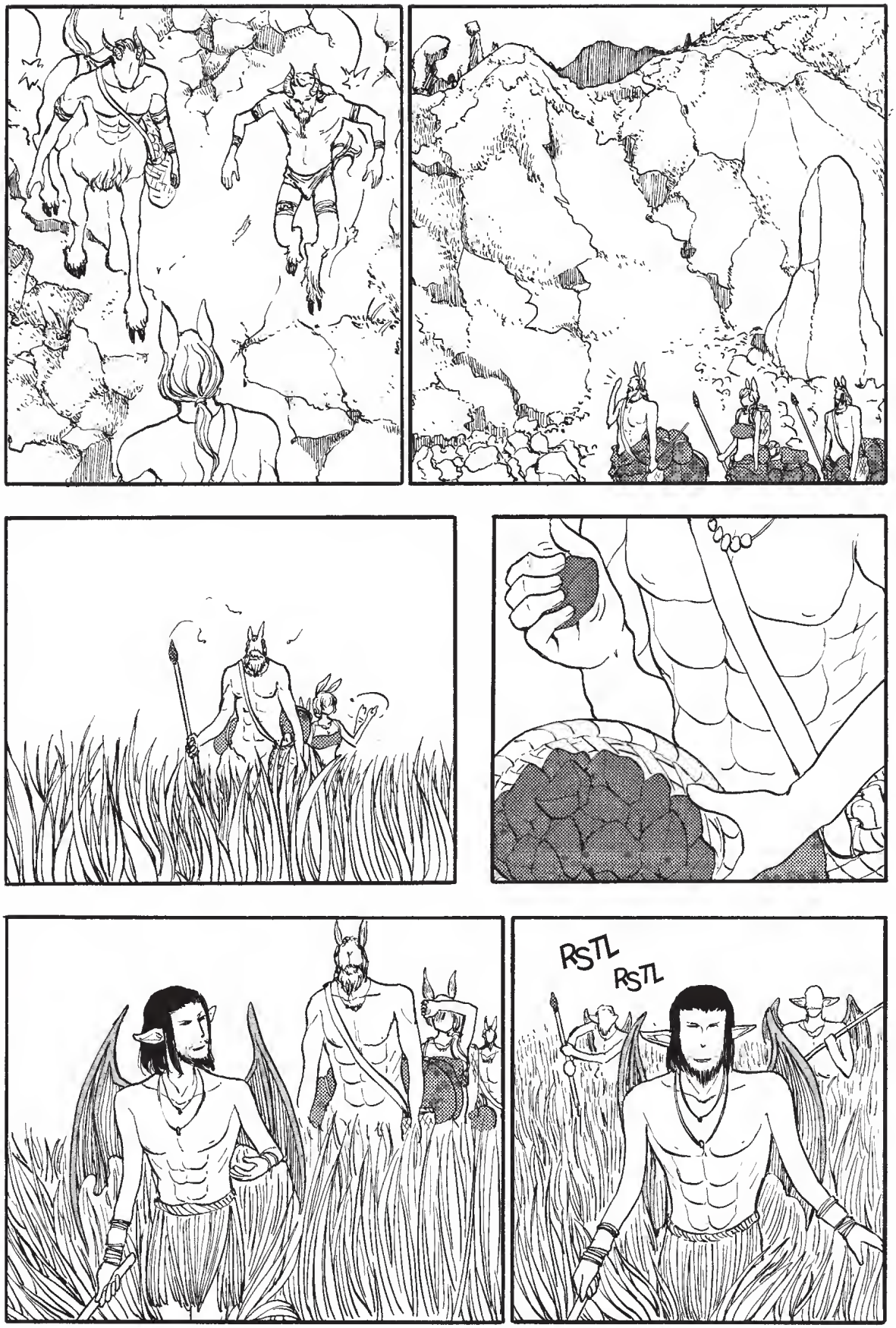

BARAAG
THUD
THUD
THUD

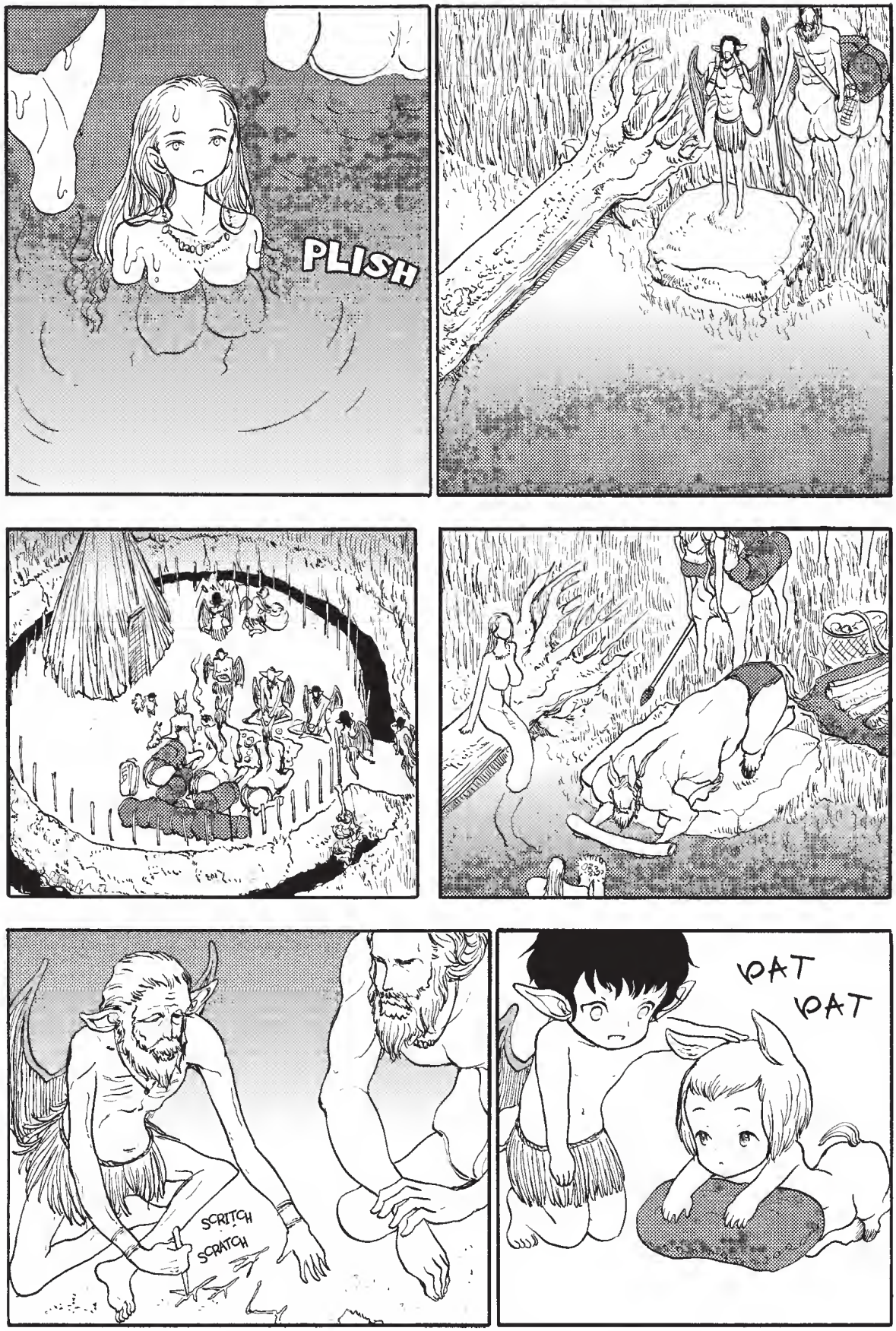
ROARR
WHSH WHSH
BARAAG
THWACK
THWACK
THWACK
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP


FA-THUD
SPRING
SQWELP
VWOOSH

FWOOO...

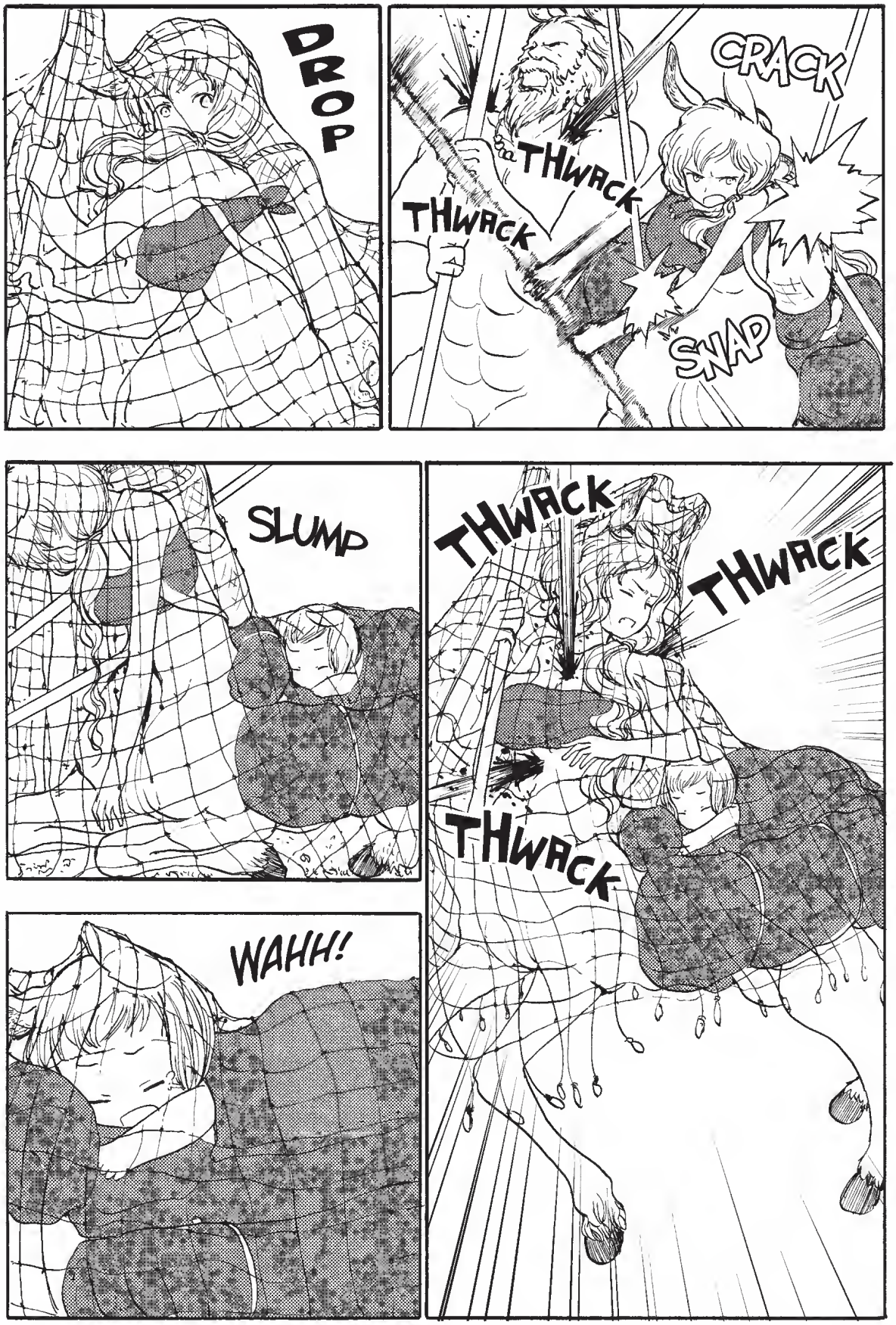

ZZZ...
FWOOO
THUMP
THUMP


RSTL
RSTL

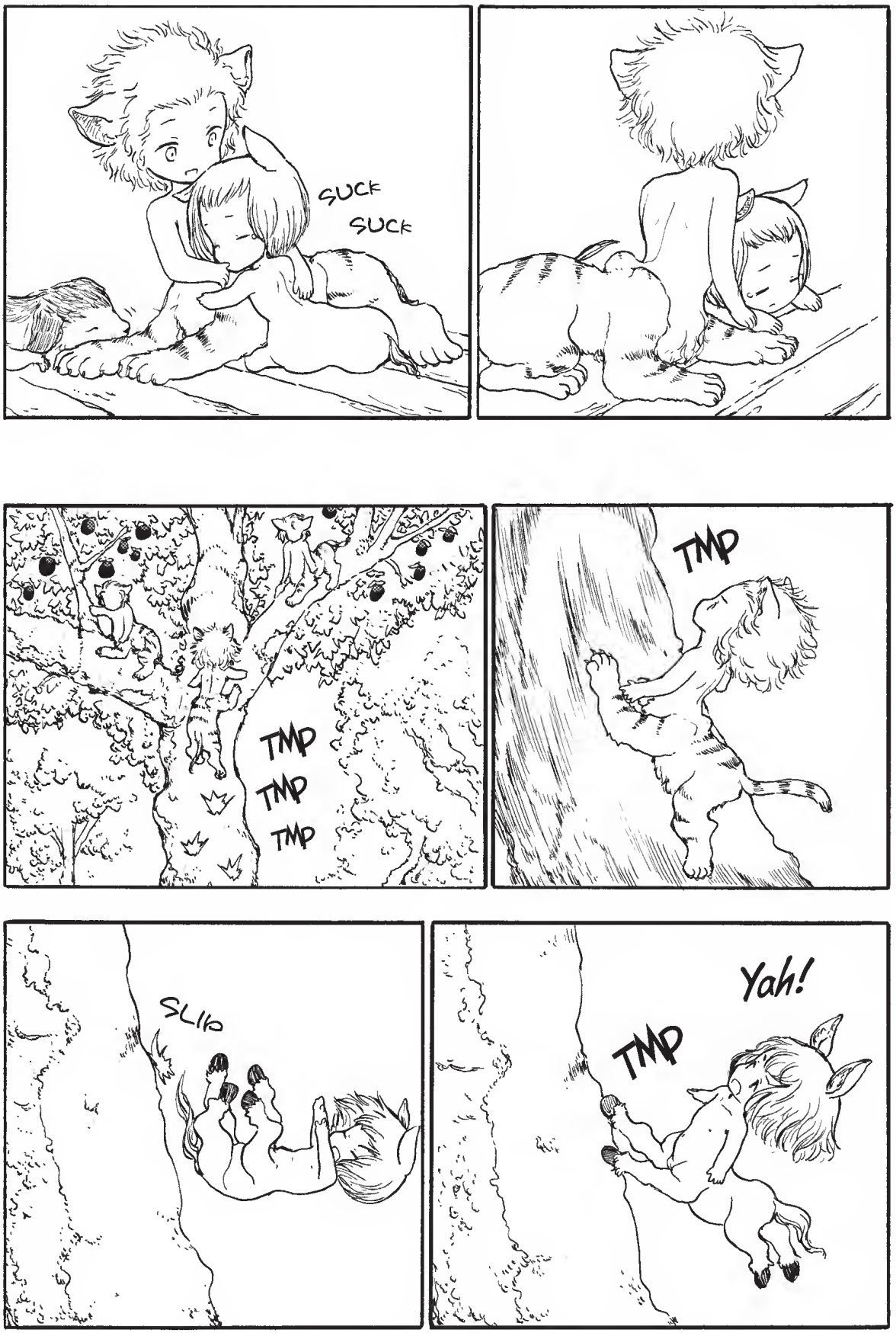

PLISH
SCRITCH
SCRATCH
PAT
PAT

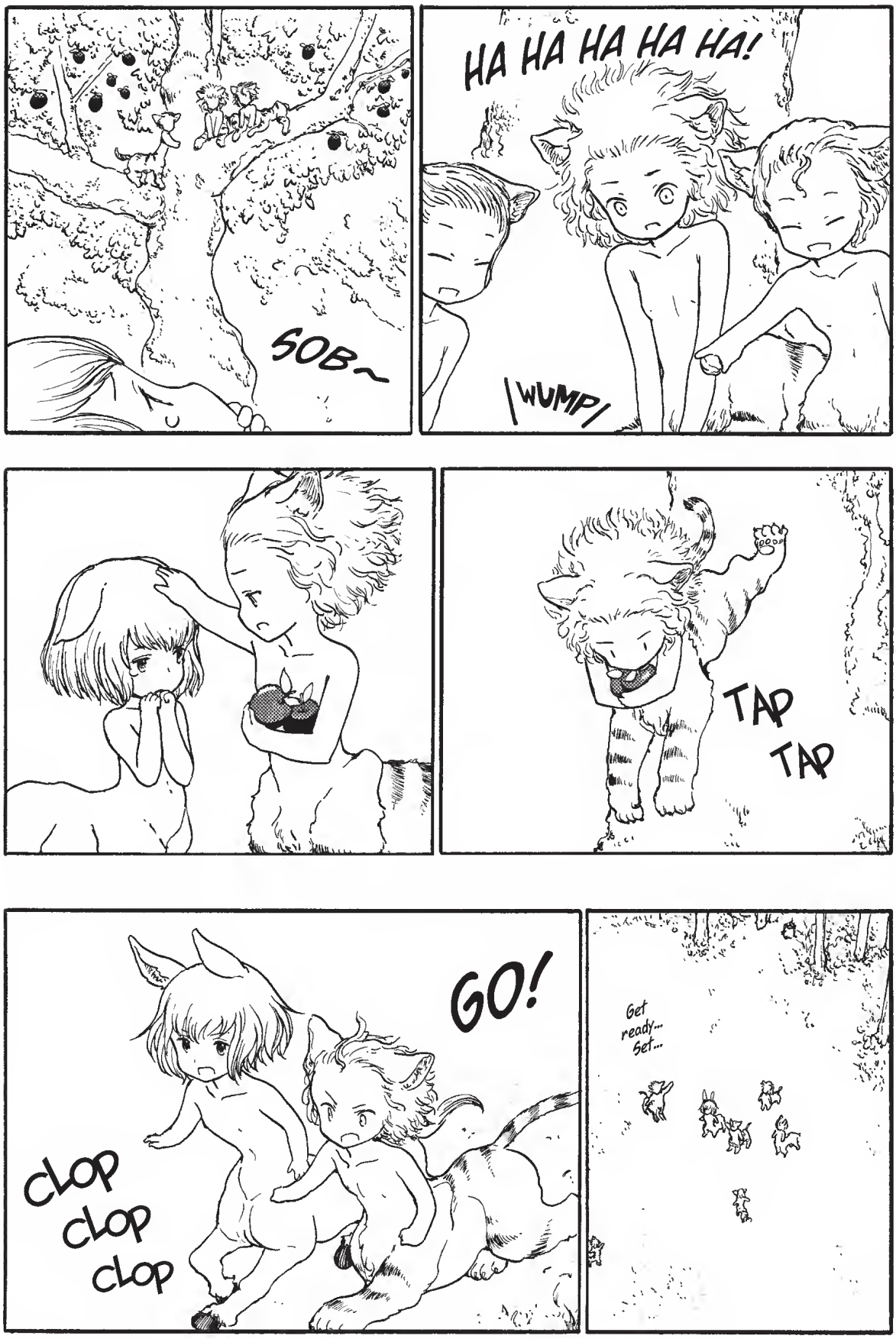
SHAKE
SHAKE
WAVE WAVE
SHWP
GOW GOW

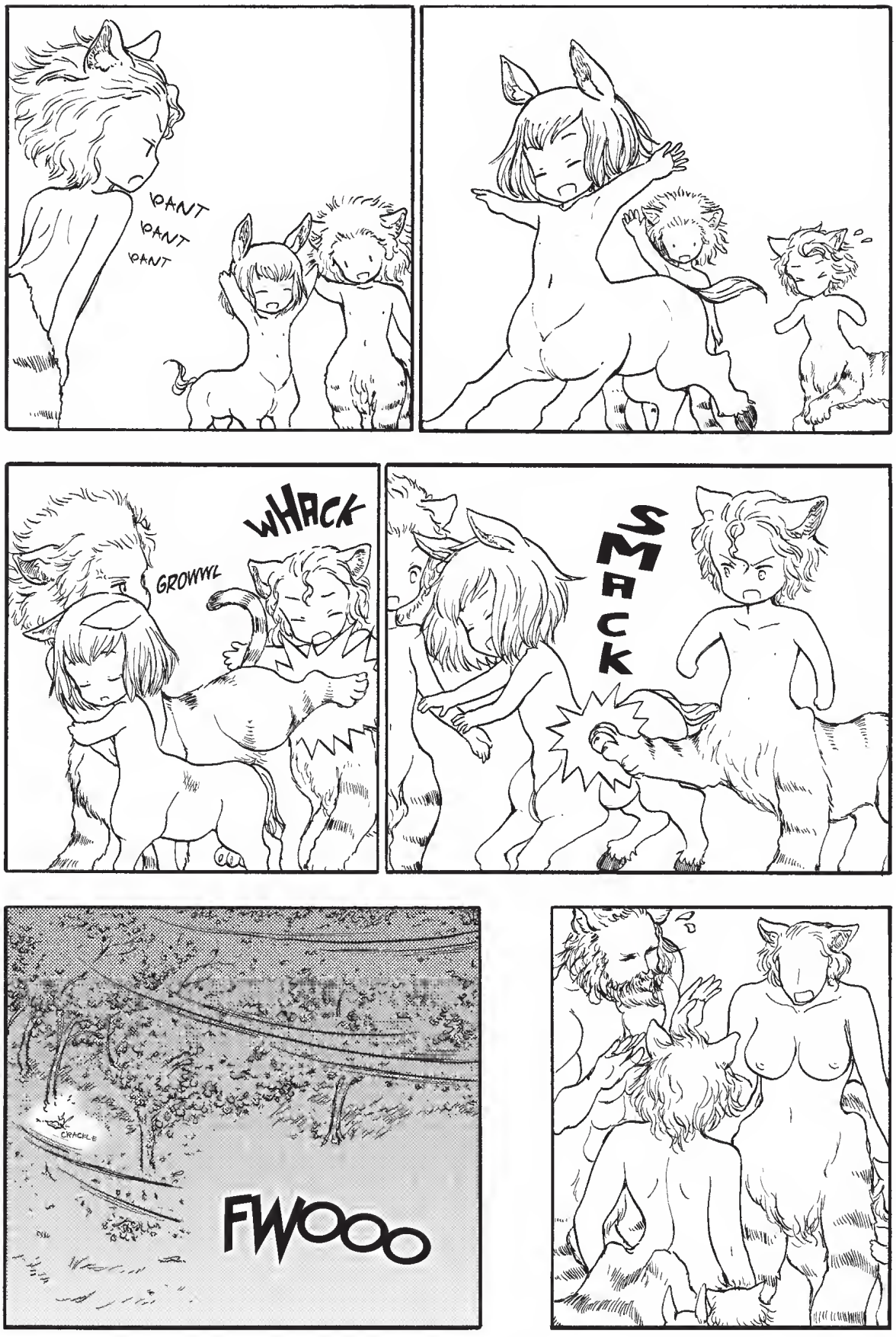
THWACK
WOOSH

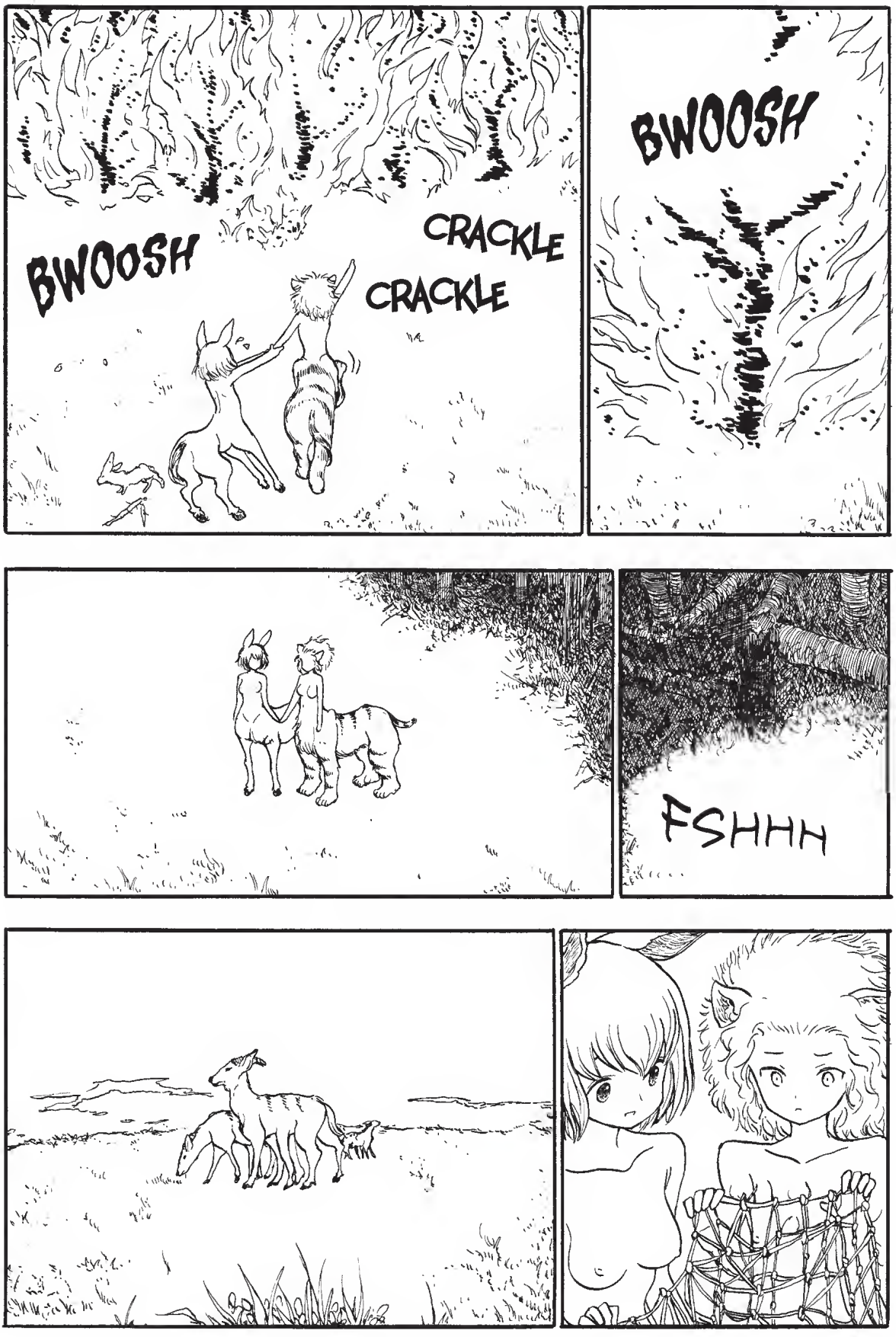

DROP
CRACK
THWACK
THWACK
SNAP
SLUMP
THWACK
THWACK
THWACK
WAHH!

UWAAA!
WAAA!
WAA!
WAA!
SLUMBER


SUCK
SUCK
TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP
SLIP
Yah!
TMP

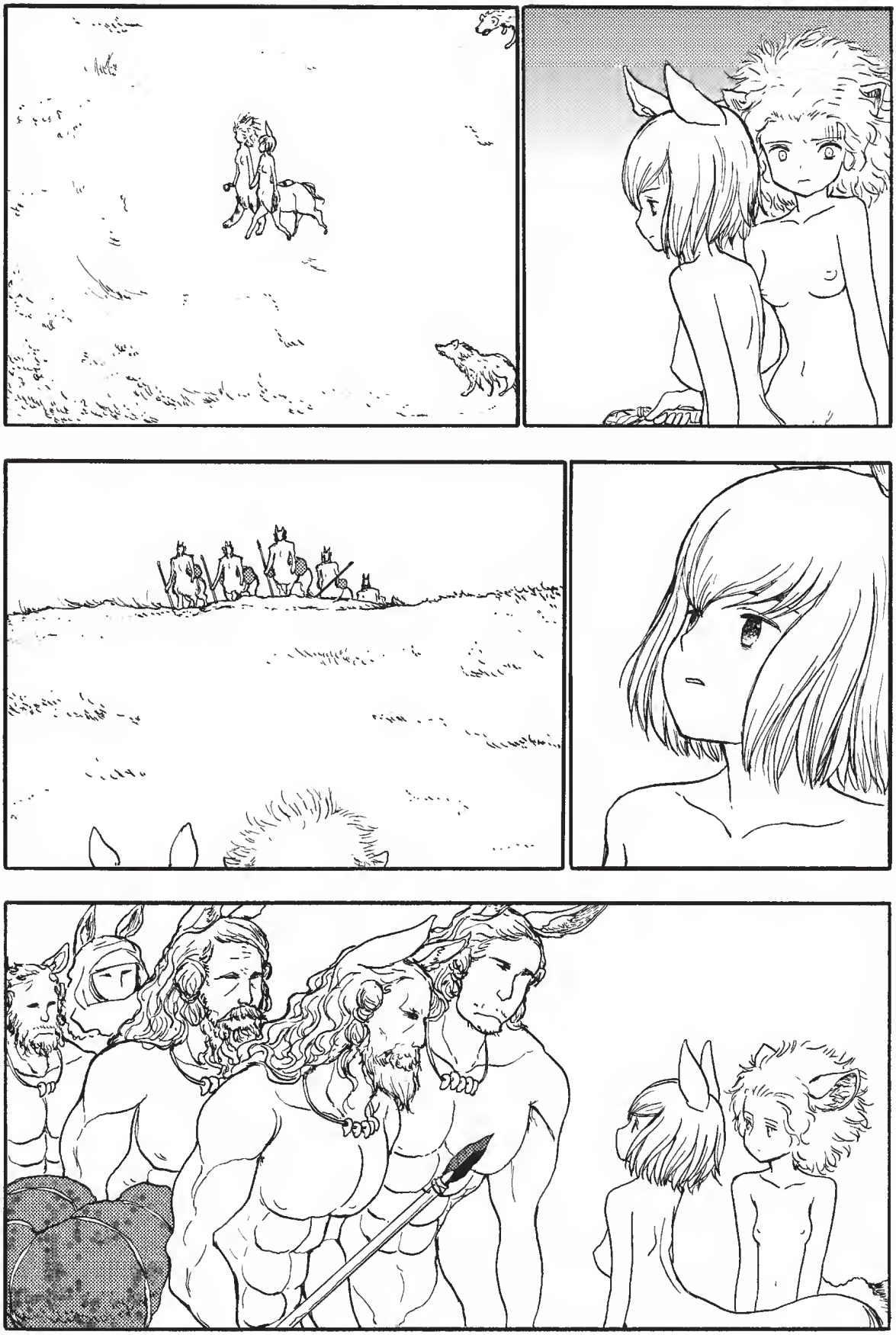

SOB~
HA HA HA HA HA!
WUMP!
TAP
TAP
GO!
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
Get ready... Set...

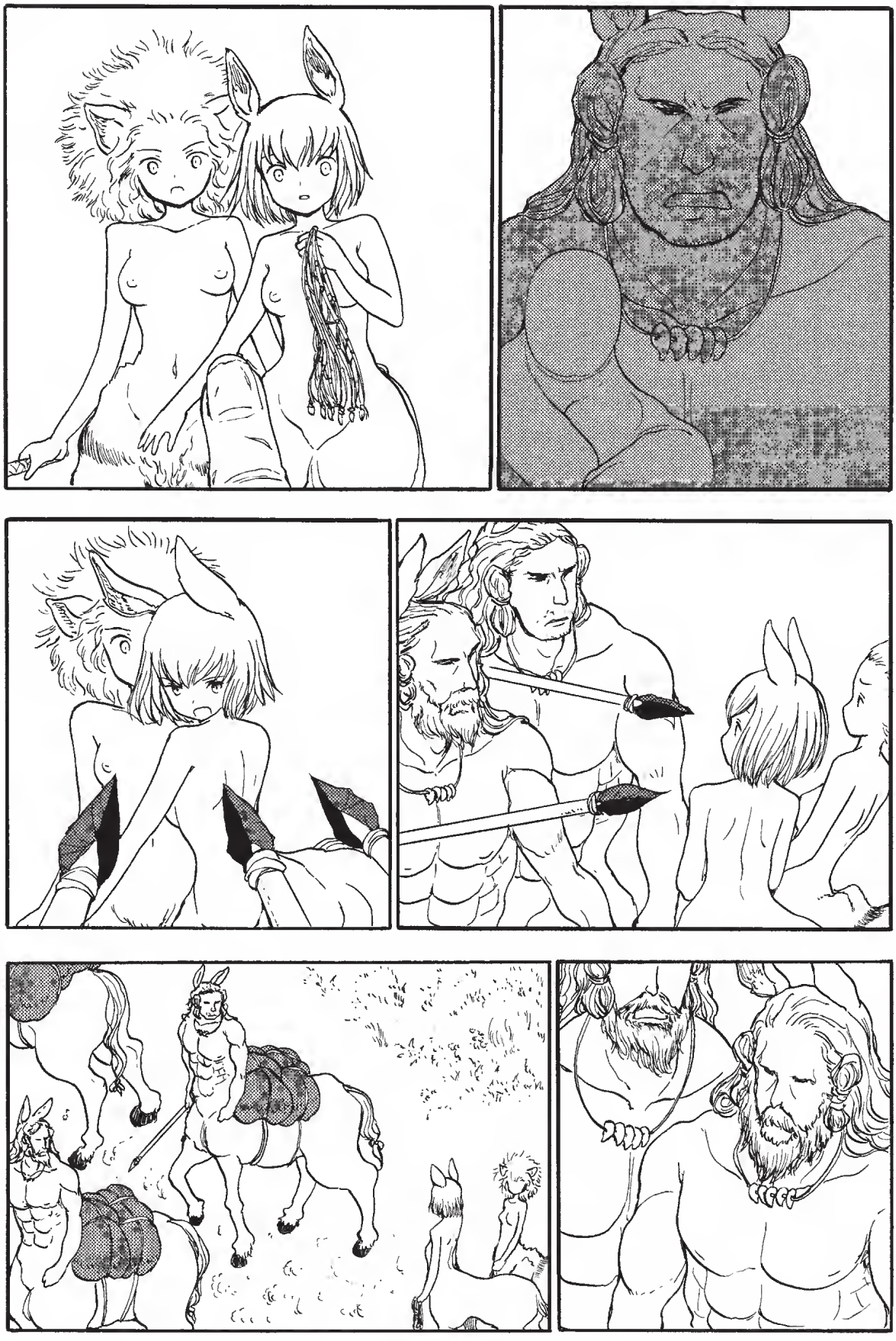

PANT
PANT
PANT
WHACK
GROWWL
SMACK
CRACKLE
FWOOO


BWOOSH
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
BWOOSH
FSHHH

DASH
WHSH
PANT
PANT
PANT
PANT
WRIGGLE
WRIGGLE

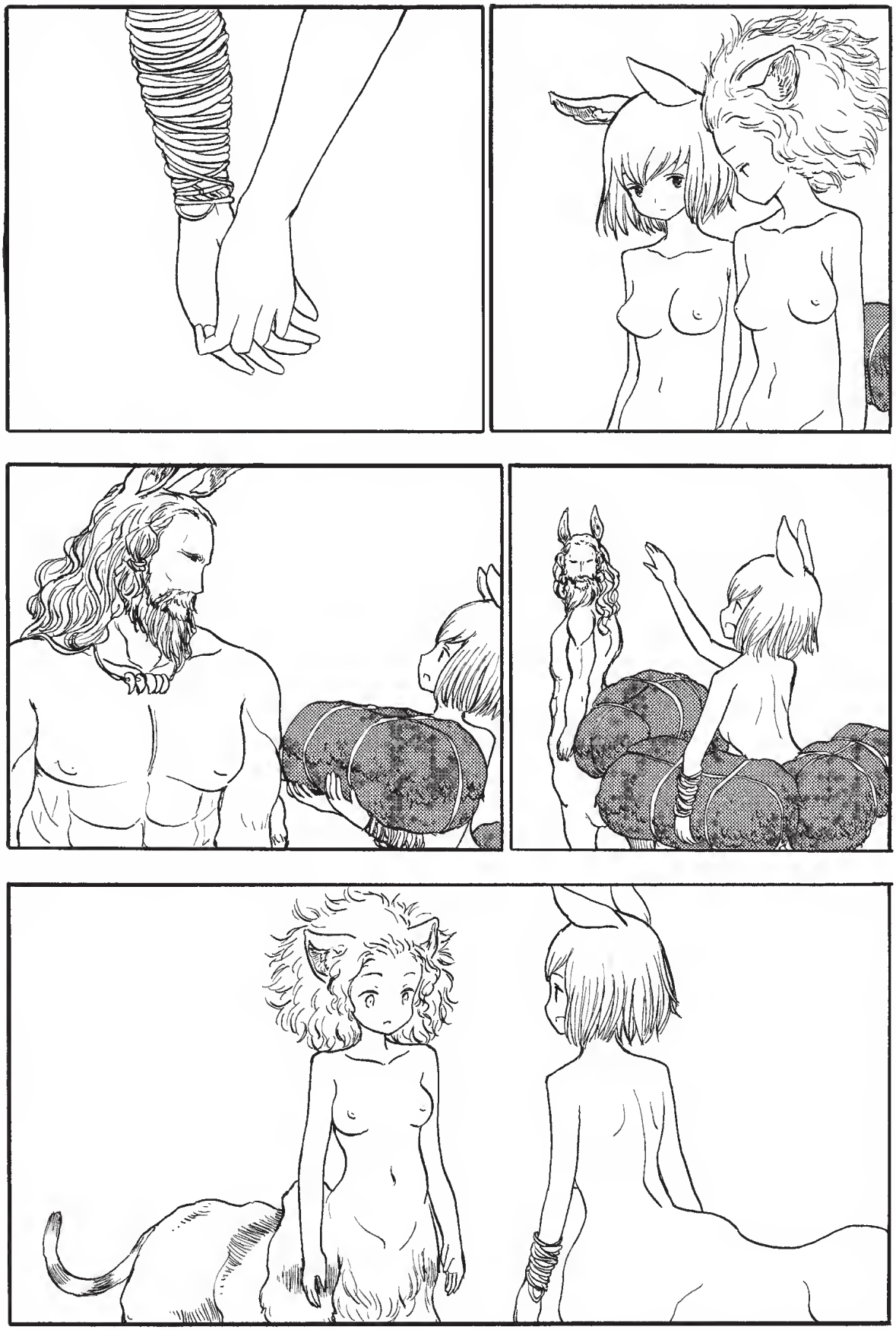
RISE
SNAP
SNAP
SNARL
WH-
CRACK
YELP!

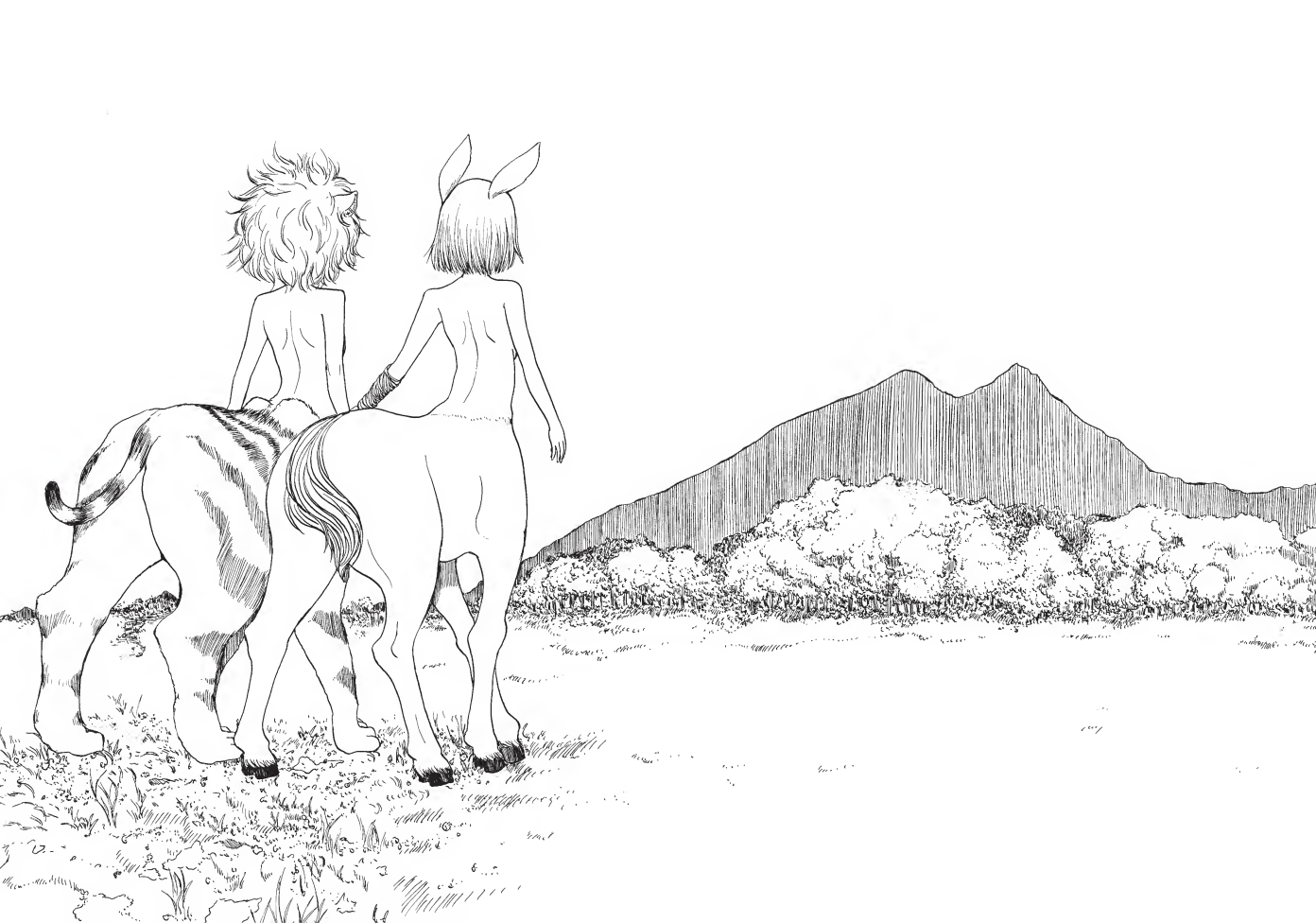


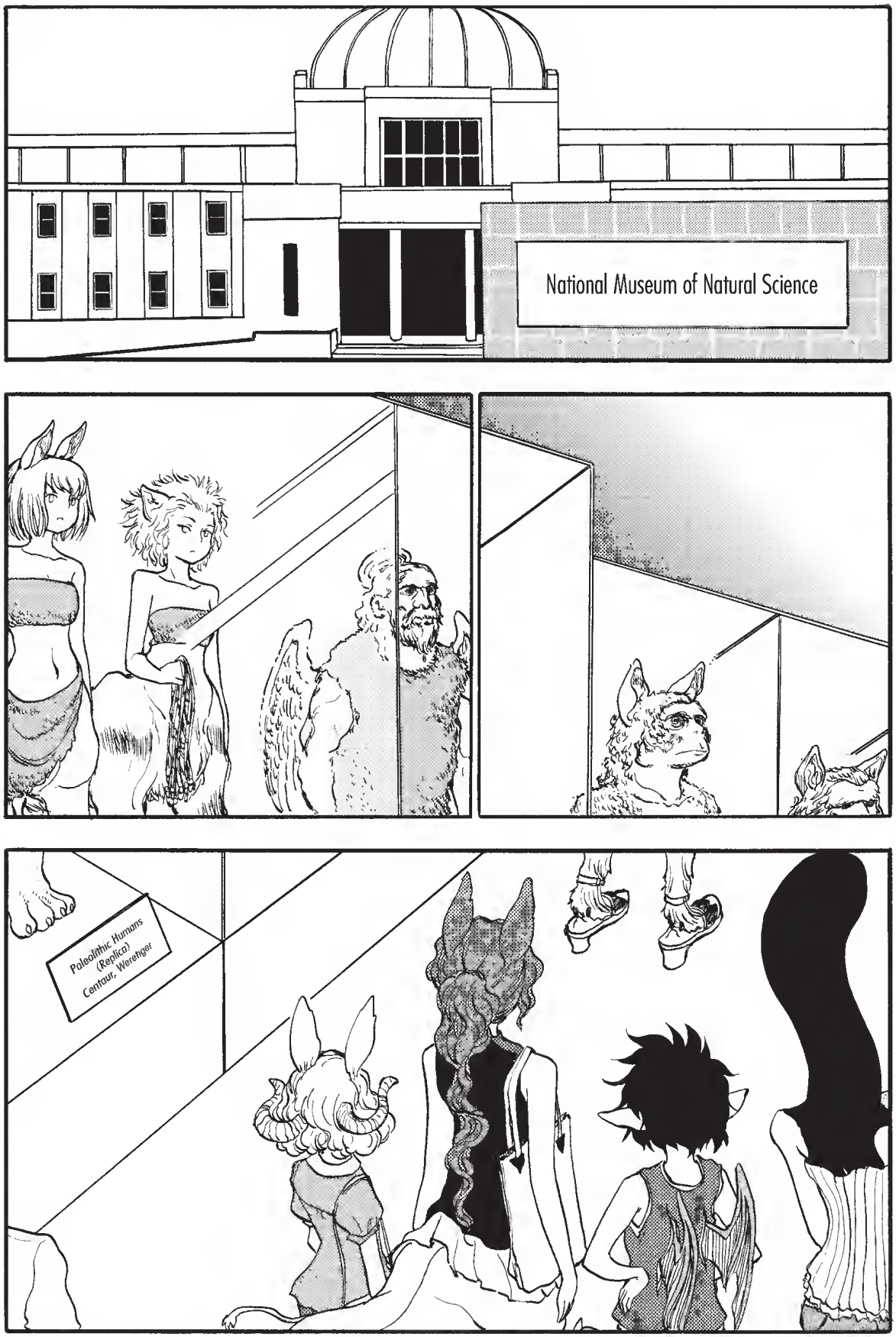


HUFF!
HUFF!
FWOOO~

FWOOO...






National Museum of Natural Science
Paleolithic Humans
(Replica)
Centaur, Weretiger

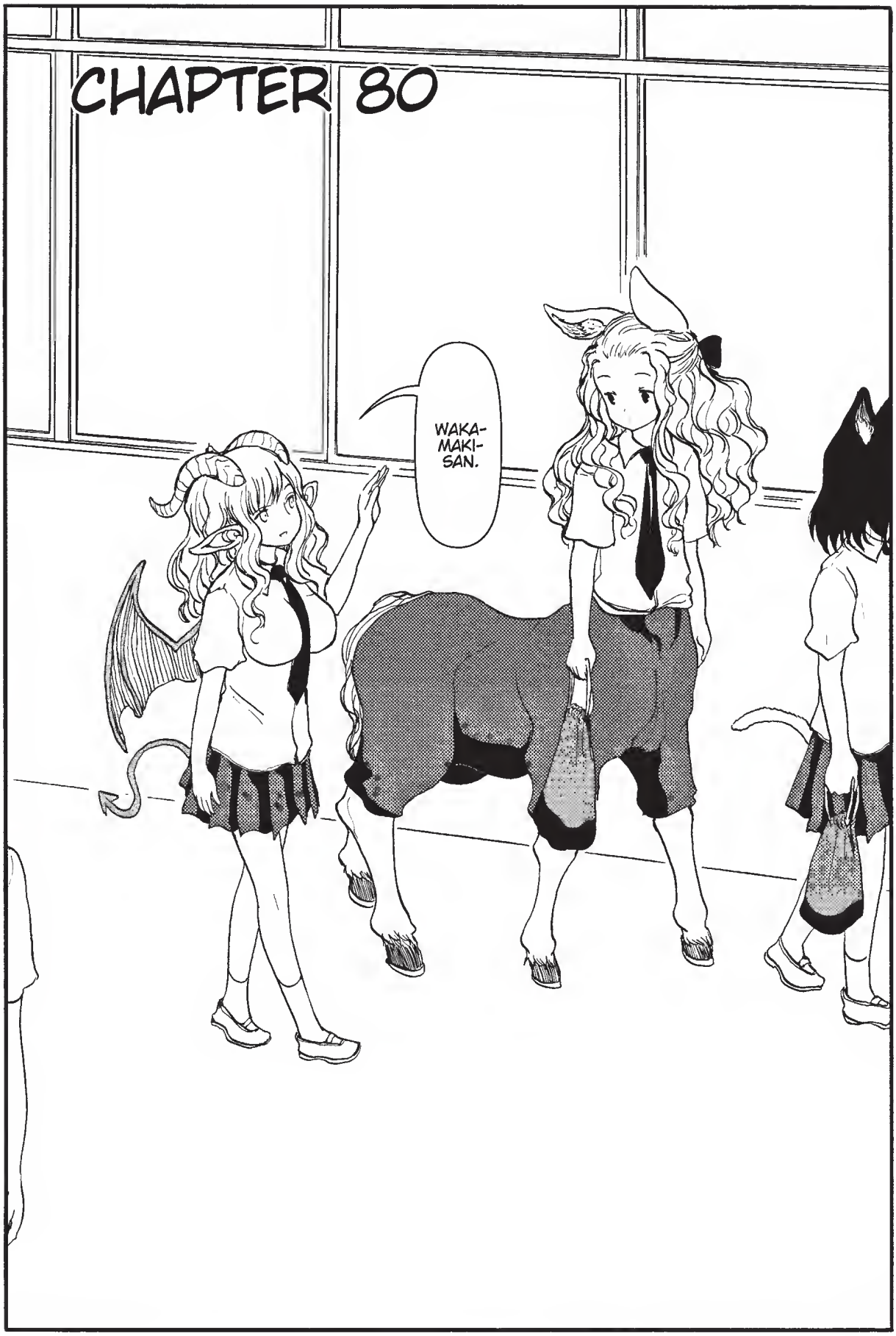
A CentaUr's Life

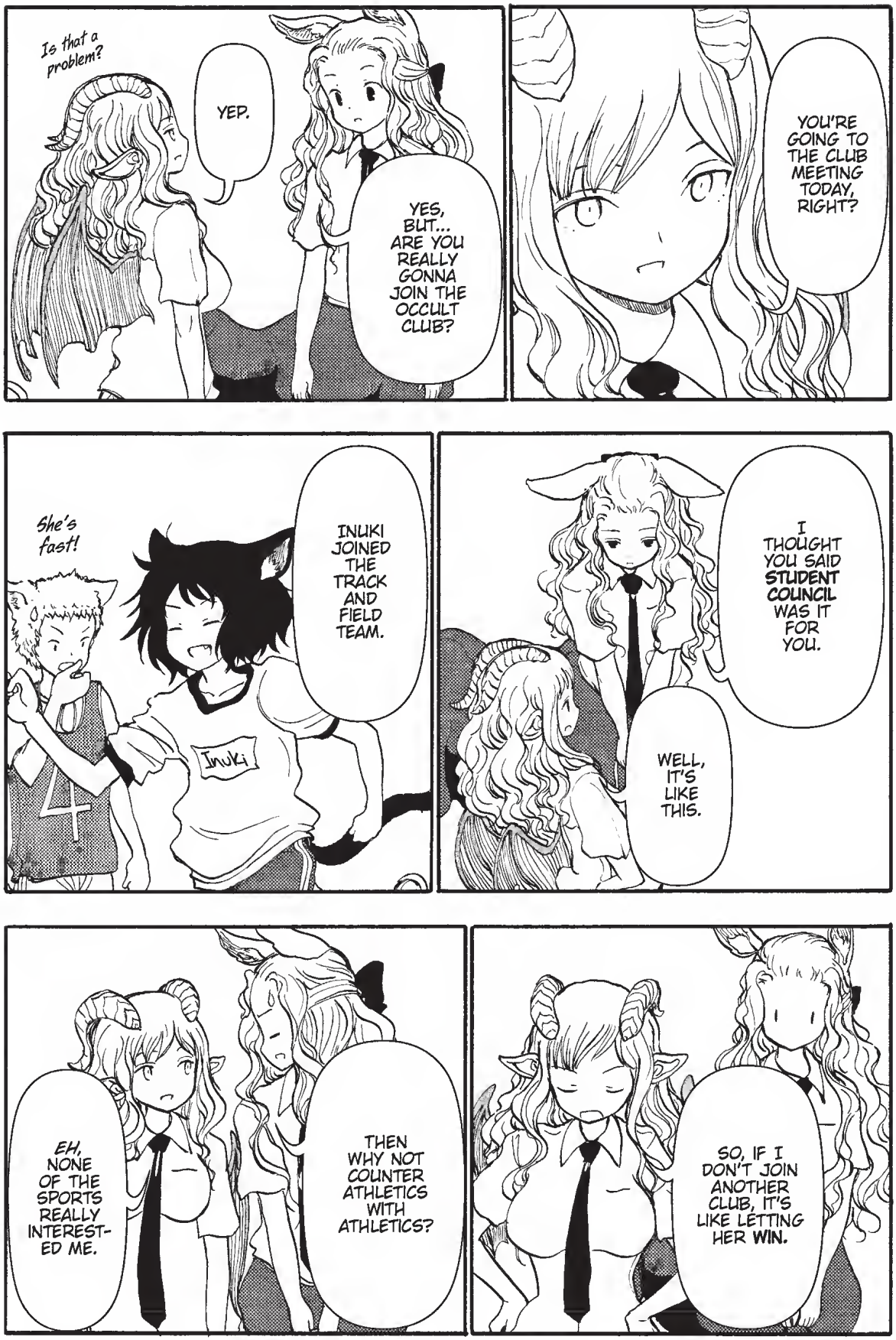
UNDERSTANDING AMPHIBIANFOLK PART 1: AMPHIBIANFOLK AS A PEOPLE

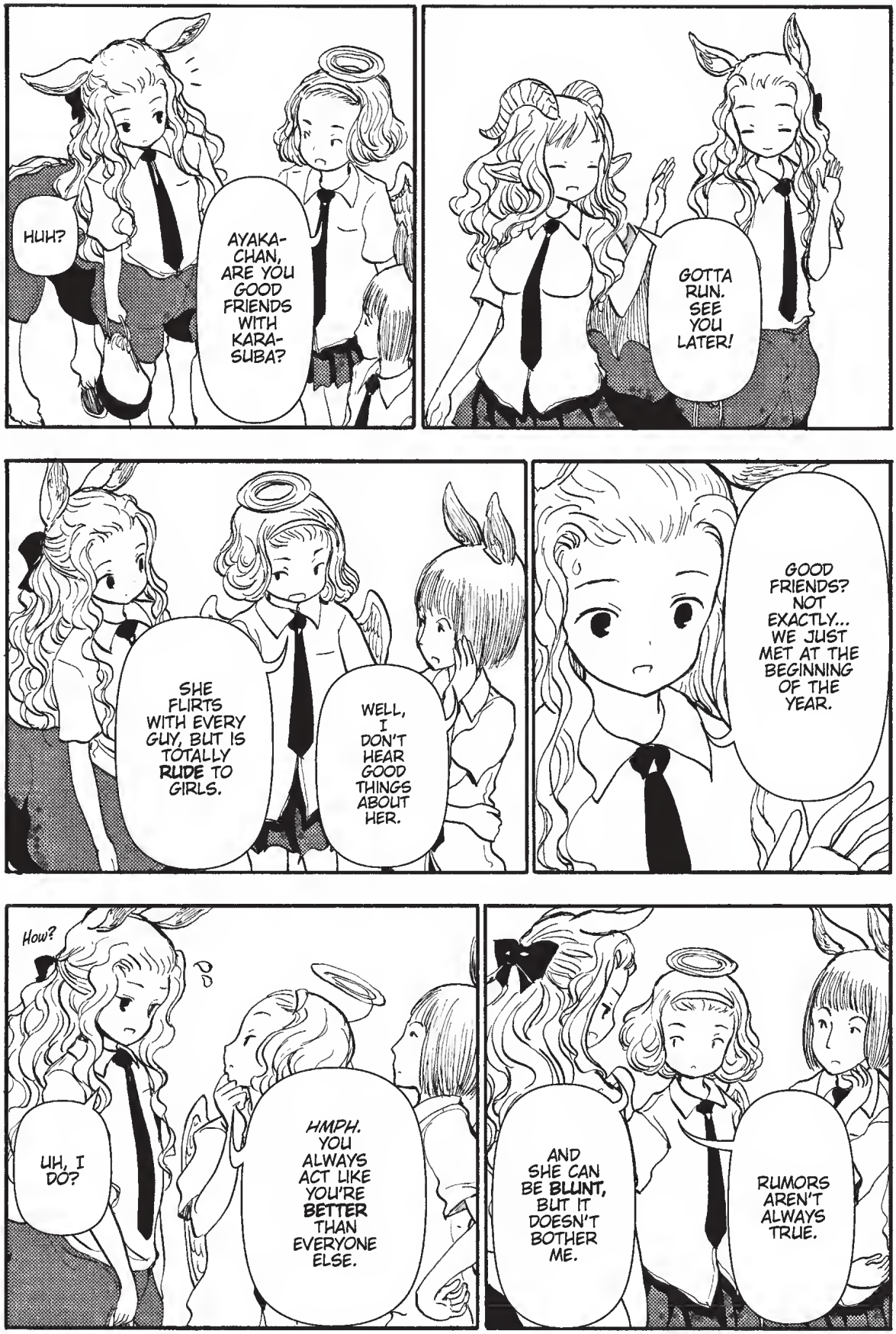
AMPHIBIANFOLK ARE A NON-MAMMALIAN INTELLIGENT RACE THAT PRIMARILY LIVE NEAR RIVER A IN SOUTH AMERICA. THEY'VE BEEN COMMONLY CALLED FROGFOLK IN THE PAST, BUT ARE NOW THOUGHT TO BE CLOSER TO AN EXTINCT SUBCLASS OF PRIMITIVE AMPHIBIANS THAN TO MEMBERS OF ORDER ANURA (FROGS AND TOADS) OR ORDER URODELA (SALAMANDERS AND NEWTS). ALTHOUGH MOST AMPHIBIANFOLK ARE BELIEVED TO SUBSIST BY FISHING AND HUNTING, SOME HAVE BEEN SEEN ENTERTAINING TOURISTS BY PERFORMING FOLK DANCES OR SELLING SOUVENIRS IN EASTERN TAWANTINSUYU. A SMALL NUMBER HAVE ESTABLISHED THEMSELVES IN MAMMALIAN COMMUNITIES. HOWEVER, THE AMPHIBIANFOLK GUERRILLA ORGANIZATION KNOWN AS CTHULCTHUL* IS GARNERING A GREAT DEAL OF MAMMALIAN ATTENTION WITH THEIR RECENT ACTIVITIES; NOW THAT THE CTHULCTHUL HAVE OCCUPIED THE UPSTREAM AREA OF RIVER A, THEY POSE A THREAT TO A MAMMALIAN NATION.

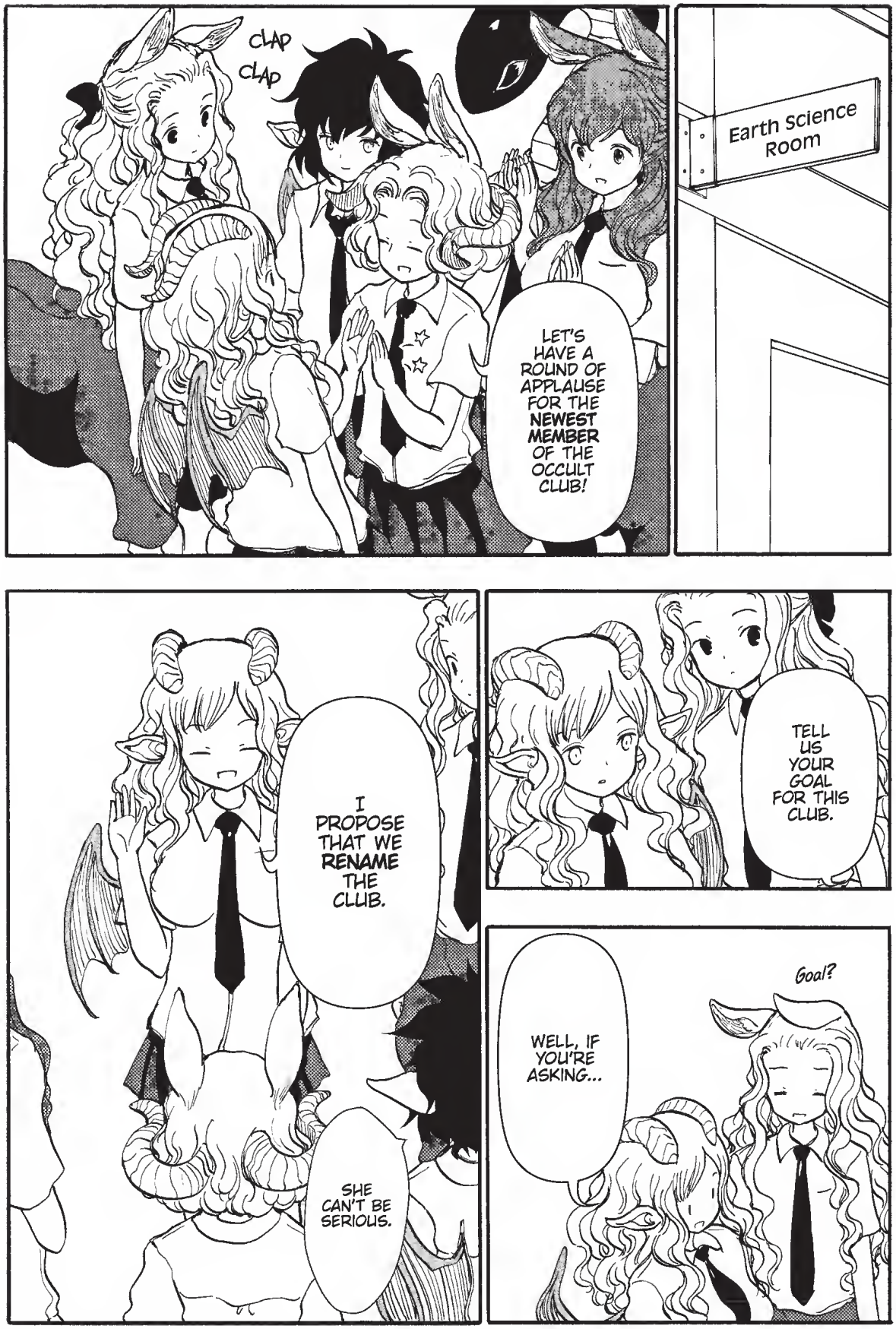
*NOTE: Cthulcthul means "Horizon of God" in the Gloloctl dialect of the amphibianfolk language.

CHAPTER 80

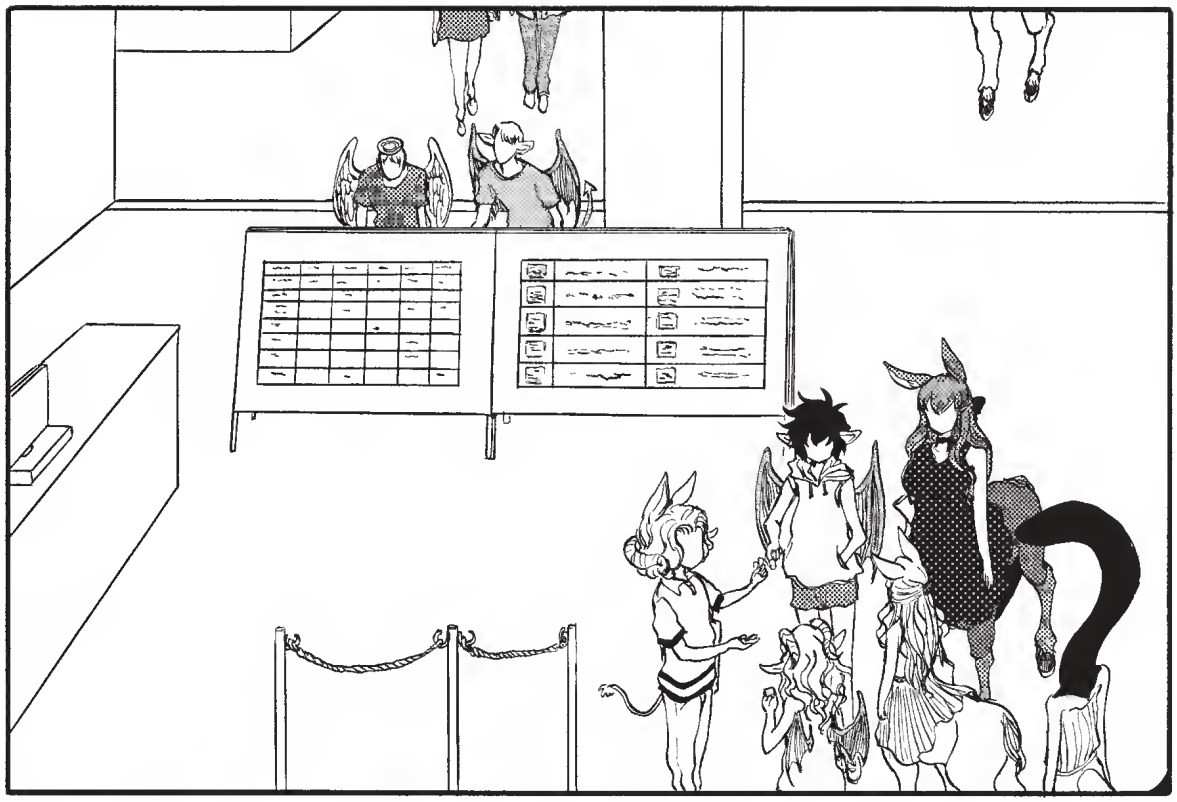


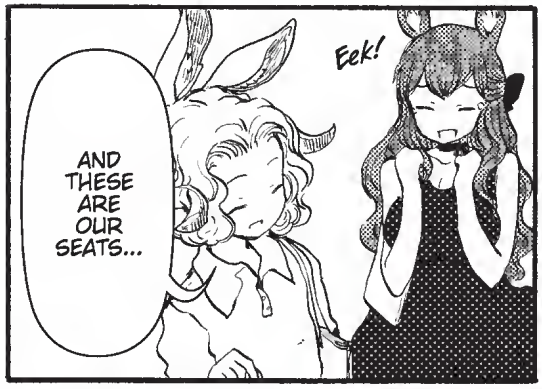

Is that a problem?
YEP.
YES, BUT... ARE YOU REALLY GONNA JOIN THE OCCULT CLUB?
YOU'RE GOING TO THE CLUB MEETING TODAY, RIGHT?
She's fast!
INUKI JOINED THE TRACK AND FIELD TEAM.
Inuki
I THOUGHT YOU SAID STUDENT COUNCIL WAS IT FOR YOU.
WELL, IT'S LIKE THIS.
EH, NONE OF THE SPORTS REALLY INTEREST-ED ME.
THEN WHY NOT COUNTER ATHLETICS WITH ATHLETICS?
SO, IF I DON'T JOIN ANOTHER CLUB, IT'S LIKE LETTING HER WIN.

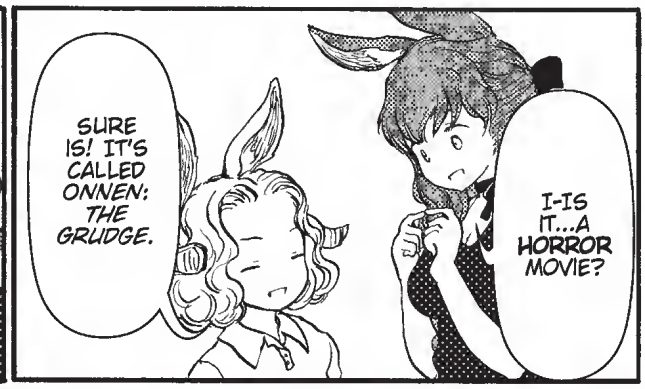

HUH?
AYAKA-CHAN, ARE YOU GOOD FRIENDS WITH KARA-SUBA?
GOTTA RUN. SEE YOU LATER!
SHE FLIRTS WITH EVERY GUY, BUT IS TOTALLY **RUDE** TO GIRLS.
WELL, I DON'T HEAR GOOD THINGS ABOUT HER.
GOOD FRIENDS? NOT EXACTLY... WE JUST MET AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR.
How?
UH, I DO?
HMPH. YOU ALWAYS ACT LIKE YOU'RE **BETTER** THAN EVERYONE ELSE.
AND SHE CAN BE **BLUNT,** BUT IT DOESN'T BOTHER ME.
RUMORS AREN'T ALWAYS TRUE.

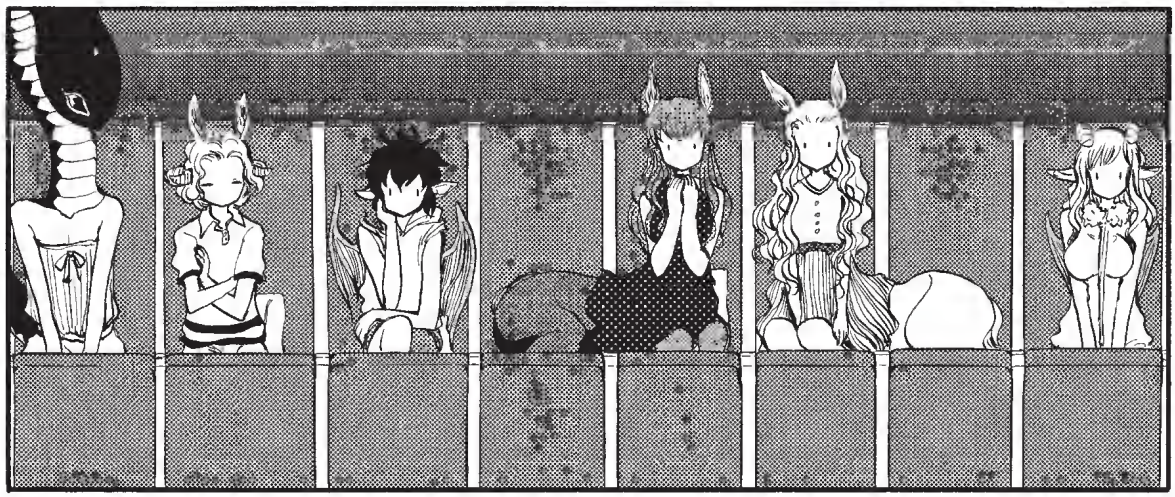

CLAP
CLAP
LET'S HAVE A ROUND OF APPLAUSE FOR THE NEWEST MEMBER OF THE OCCULT CLUB!
Earth Science Room
I PROPOSE THAT WE RENAME THE CLUB.
SHE CAN'T BE SERIOUS.
TELL US YOUR GOAL FOR THIS CLUB.
Goal?
WELL, IF YOU'RE ASKING...

I'M NOT INTERESTED IN IT, EITHER.
ARE ANY OF YOU ACTUALLY INTERESTED IN SUPERNATURAL PHENOMENA?
I don't like scary stuff.
Nope.
Not even a little.
I'm still not sure what it means.
THEN WOULDN'T IT BE BETTER TO CALL IT THE ETHNIC STUDIES CLUB?
THEN YOU COULD USE THAT PRETEXT TO SPEND THE BUDGET ON TRIPS!
THAT'S... ACTUALLY A GOOD IDEA. BUT SINCE AKECHI AND INUKAI AREN'T HERE, THE FORMAL DECISION WILL HAVE TO WAIT.
LET'S JUST DO THIS FOR NOW.
WHAT'S THAT?
I got them from my old man.
MOVIE TICKETS!



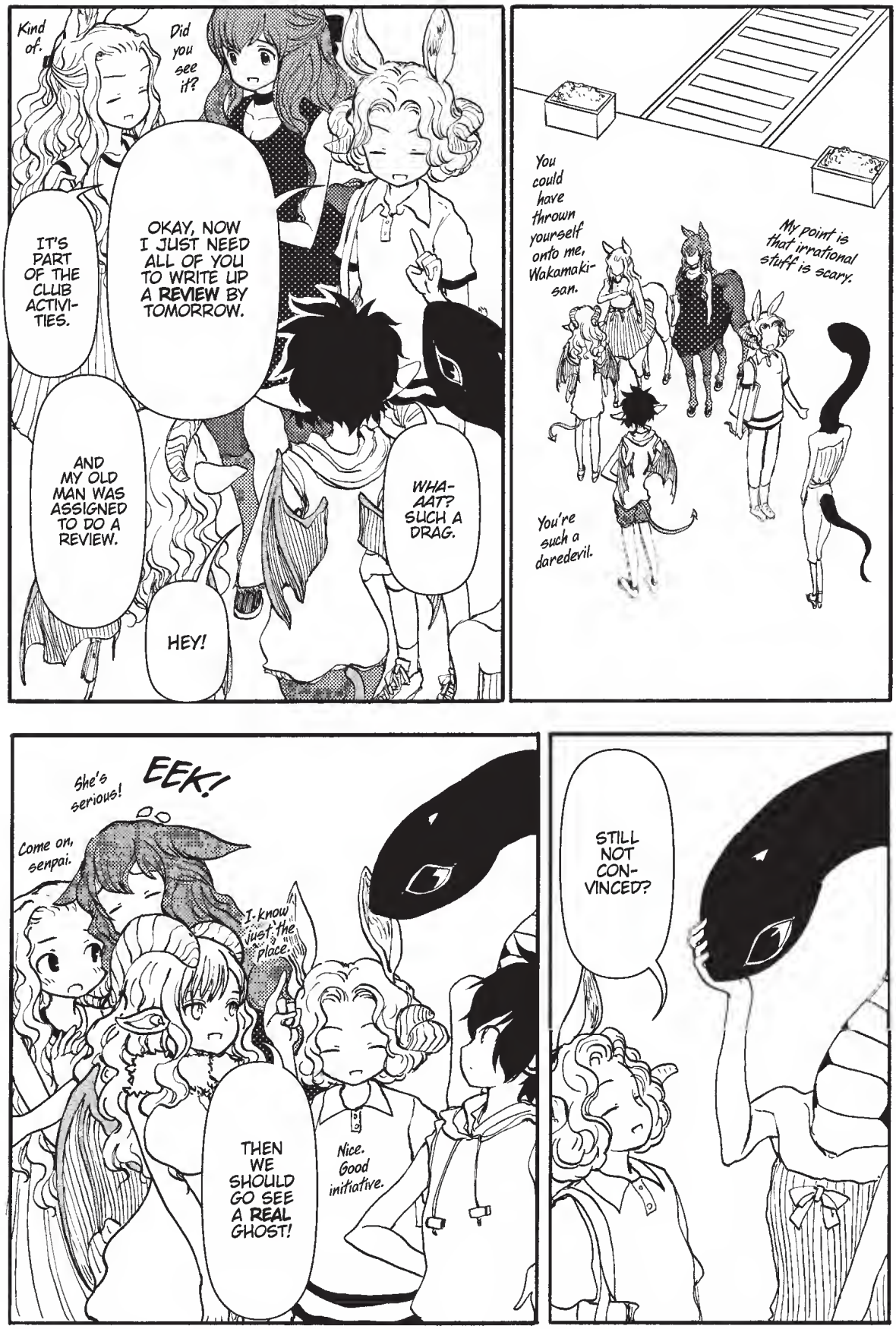

Eek!
AND THESE ARE OUR SEATS...


SURE IS! IT'S CALLED ONNEN: THE GRUDGE.
I-IS IT...A HORROR MOVIE?



BEFORE WE PRESENT THE FILM, PLEASE RISE FOR OUR NATIONAL ANTHEM.
ACTUALLY... NOT SO MUCH.
DO YOU LIKE SCARY MOVIES?
OH, OUR COUNTRY OF DEMOCRACY, EQUALITY, AND FREEDOM... GLORY BE UPON US FOREVER AND EVER.
OH, WE ARE A NATION OF DEMOCRACY, EQUALITY, AND FREEDOM...FOR THE UNIVERSAL CAUSE WE STAND, FILL THE WORLD WITH JUSTICE...
IS IT REALLY THE GRUDGE THAT'S MAKING HIM DO THIS?
OH, MAN. IT'S MAKING HIM SAY THE "A"-WORD.
HE'S GOTTEN VIOLENT.
TO HELL WITH THE GRUDGE!
SHOVE IT UP HIS ASS AND MAKE HIM RATTLE!
TEIE!
EEEK!

?
AAAH!!
RAWR!
IT'S SO CLICHÉ, BUT I'LL GIVE IT SEVENTY POINTS.
...If I'd stayed between them.
THAT WOULD'VE KILLED ME...
AAH!
SQUEEZE
CRACK
CRACK
KYAA!

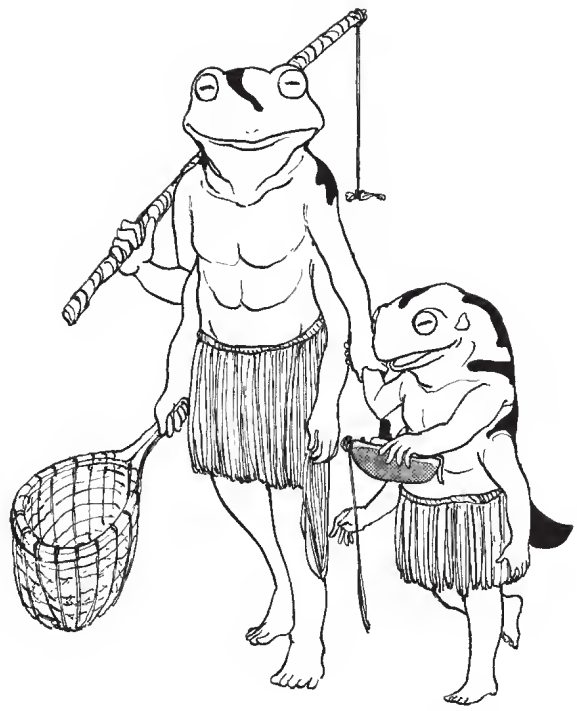

Kind of.
Did you see it?
IT'S PART OF THE CLUB ACTIVITIES.
OKAY, NOW I JUST NEED ALL OF YOU TO WRITE UP A REVIEW BY TOMORROW.
AND MY OLD MAN WAS ASSIGNED TO DO A REVIEW.
HEY!
WHA-AAT? SUCH A DRAG.
You could have thrown yourself onto me, Wakamaki-san.
My point is that irrational stuff is scary.
You're such a daredevil.
EEK!
She's serious!
Come on, senpai.
I know just the place.
THEN WE SHOULD GO SEE A REAL GHOST!
Nice. Good initiative.
STILL NOT CONVINCED?

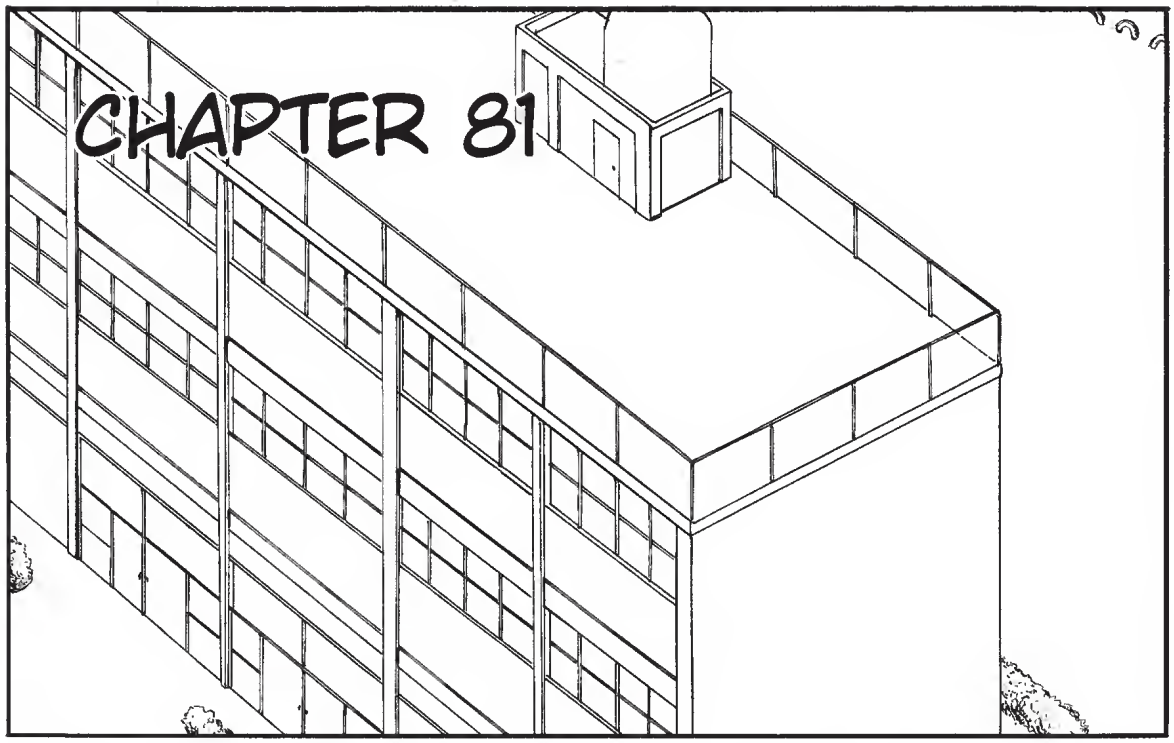
A CentaUr's Life

UNDERSTANDING AMPHIBIANFOLK PART 2: THE MISUNDERSTANDING OF AMPHIBIANFOLK

BECAUSE OF THEIR APPEARANCE, SOME PEOPLE MISTAKENLY BELIEVE THAT AMPHIBIANFOLK ARE NOTHING MORE THAN WALKING FROGS, BUT THEY ARE IN FACT ADVANCED LIFE FORMS. DESPITE THE NAME OF THEIR RACE, THEY DO NOT FIT THE TYPICAL CLASSIFICATION OF AMPHIBIANS. INSPECTING THEIR GENETIC MAKEUP SHOWS US THAT THE GENETIC DISTANCE BETWEEN A BULLFROG AND AN AMPHIBIANFOLK IS SIMILAR TO THE DISTANCE BETWEEN A FROG AND A MAMMALIAN HUMAN. THIS AND MANY OTHER FACTORS HAVE LED SCIENTISTS TO CONCLUDE THAT AMPHIBIANFOLK CAN BE CONSIDERED BIOLOGICALLY EQUIVALENT, AND IN SOME WAYS POSSIBLY SUPERIOR, TO MAMMALIAN HUMANS.

UNLIKE TYPICAL AMPHIBIANS, THEIR SKIN ISN'T A MUCUS MEMBRANE--THIS MEANS THAT THEY ARE ABLE TO TOLERATE DRY CONDITIONS, ALBEIT IN A LIMITED FASHION. THEIR EYES ARE POSITIONED CLOSER TO THE FRONT OF THEIR HEADS THAN IS SEEN IN FROGS, GIVING THEM EXCELLENT BINOCULAR VISION. RESEARCH SHOWS THAT THEY ARE HOMEOTHERMIC AND JUST AS INTELLIGENT AS MAMMALIAN HUMANS. THEIR RELATIVELY PRIMITIVE WAY OF LIFE SEEMS TO BE DUE TO THEIR GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, WHICH WILL BE EXPLAINED LATER, RATHER THAN BECAUSE THEY ARE SOMEHOW INFERIOR. THOSE WHO CONSIDER THEM INFERIOR SHOULD BE REMINDED THAT THERE ARE MAMMALIAN HUMANS LIVING RELATIVELY PRIMITIVELY OUTSIDE OF THE CULTURAL CENTERS OF CIVILIZATION, AND SOME WHO ARE INTELLECTUALLY IGNORANT WITHIN.

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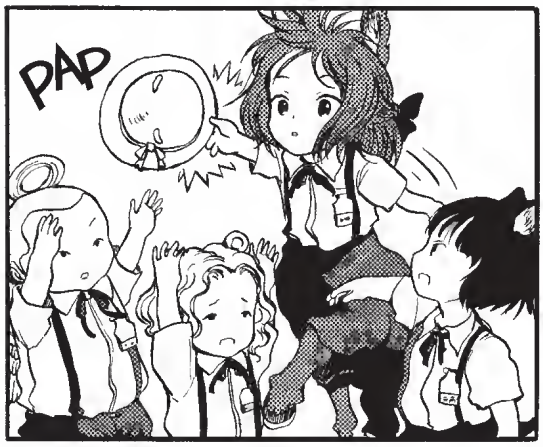
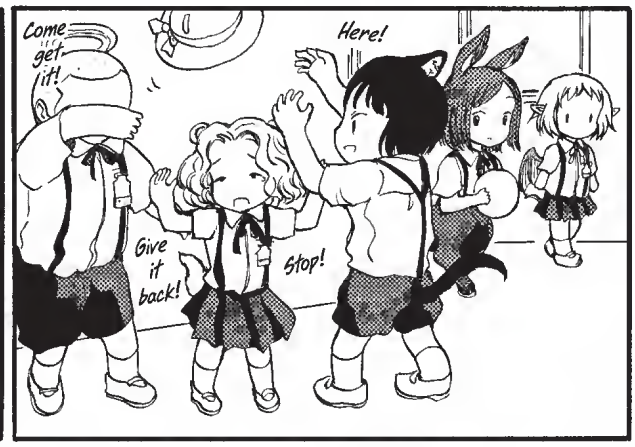
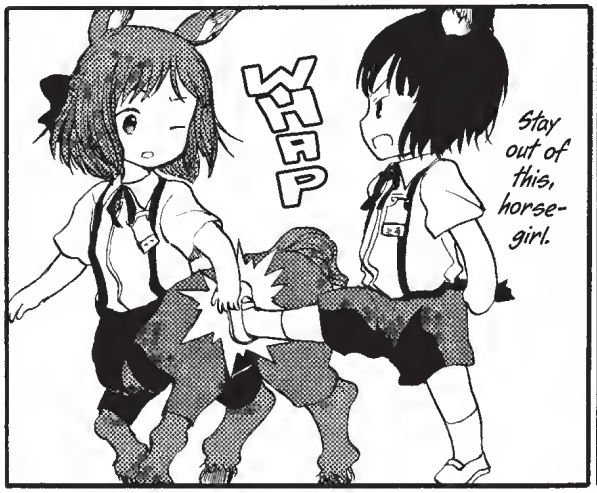
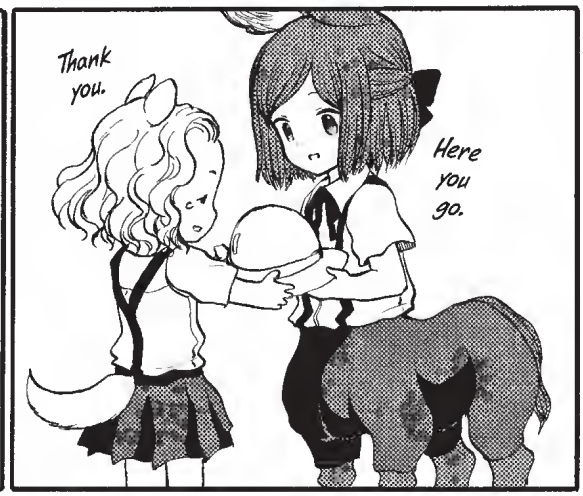
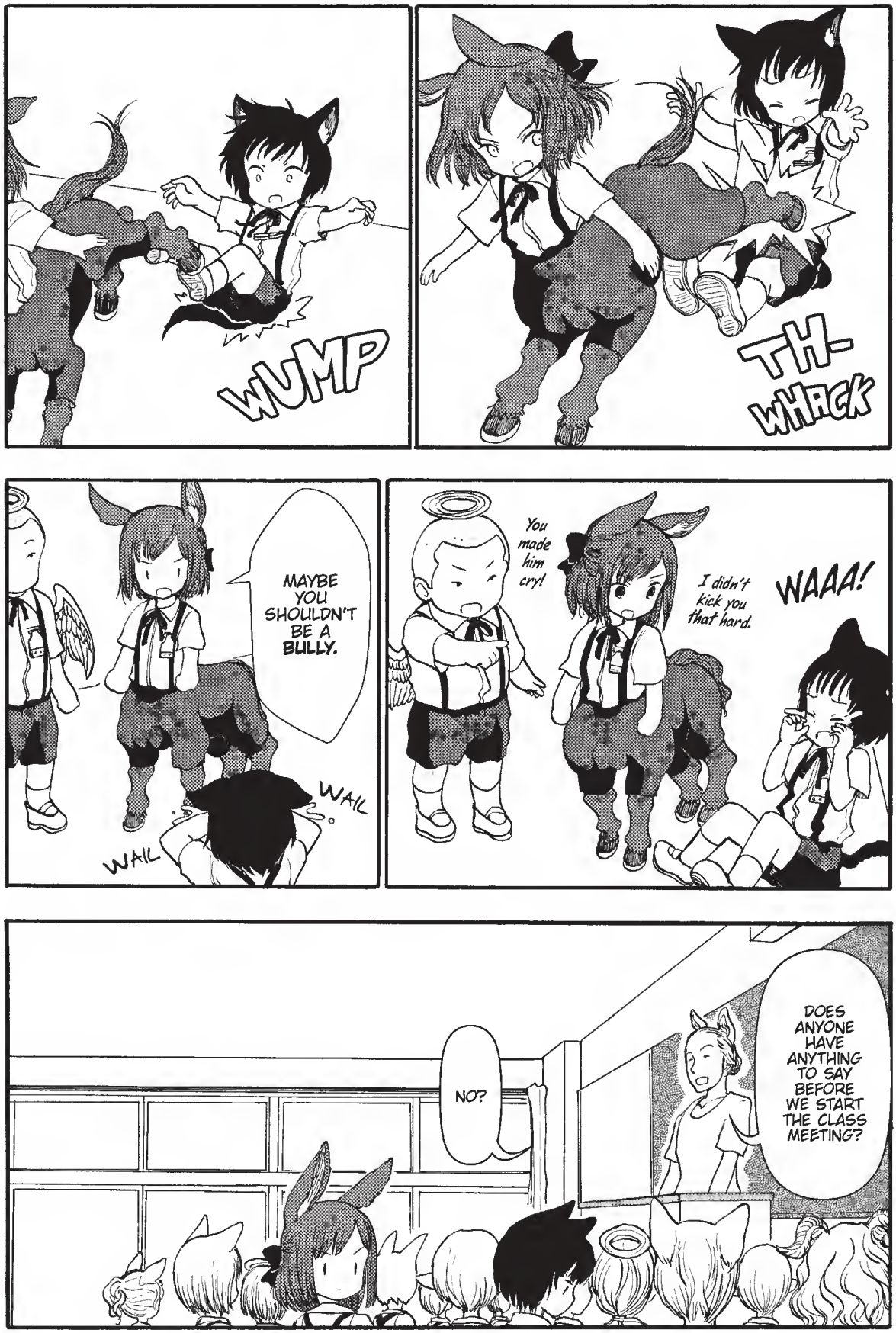

PAP


Come get it!
Here!
Give it back!
Stop!


WHAP
Stay out of this, horse-girl.

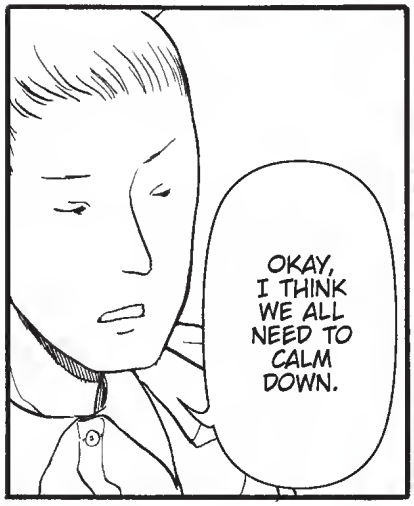

Thank you.
Here you go.

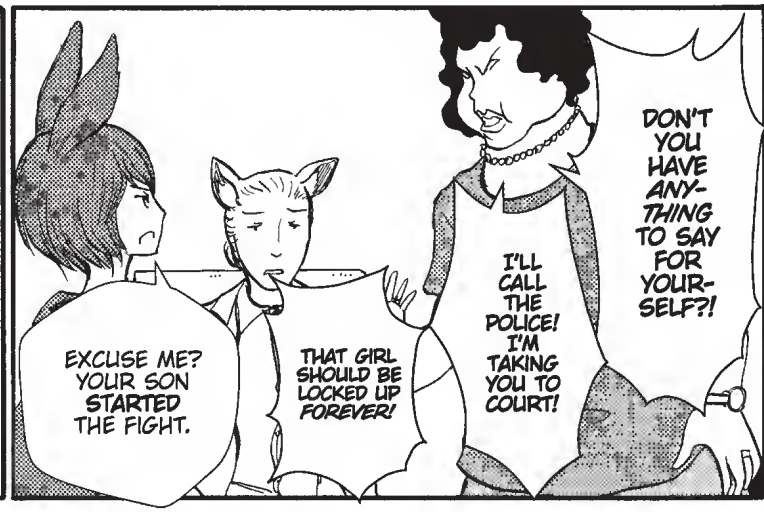

WUMP
TH-WHACK
MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T BE A BULLY.
WAIL
WAIL
You made him cry!
I didn't kick you that hard.
WAAA!
NO?
DOES ANYONE HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY BEFORE WE START THE CLASS MEETING?

YOU'RE GONNA PAY FOR HURTING ME THE OTHER DAY.
MY BIG BROTHER KNOWS KARATE.
HEY, YOU!
DUCK
COWER
HUH?! YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT?!
LOWLIFE! CHEATER!
NO FAIR BRINGING YOUR BROTHER INTO THIS!

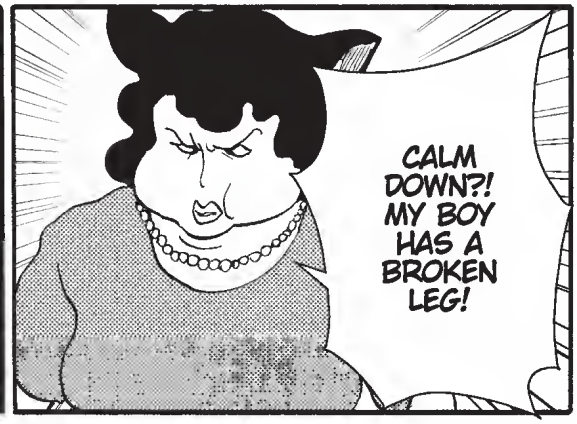
I HEARD YOU KICKED MY BROTHER AND MADE HIM CRY.
AND THAT'S WHAT I'M GONNA DO TO YOU.
WHSH
YAH!

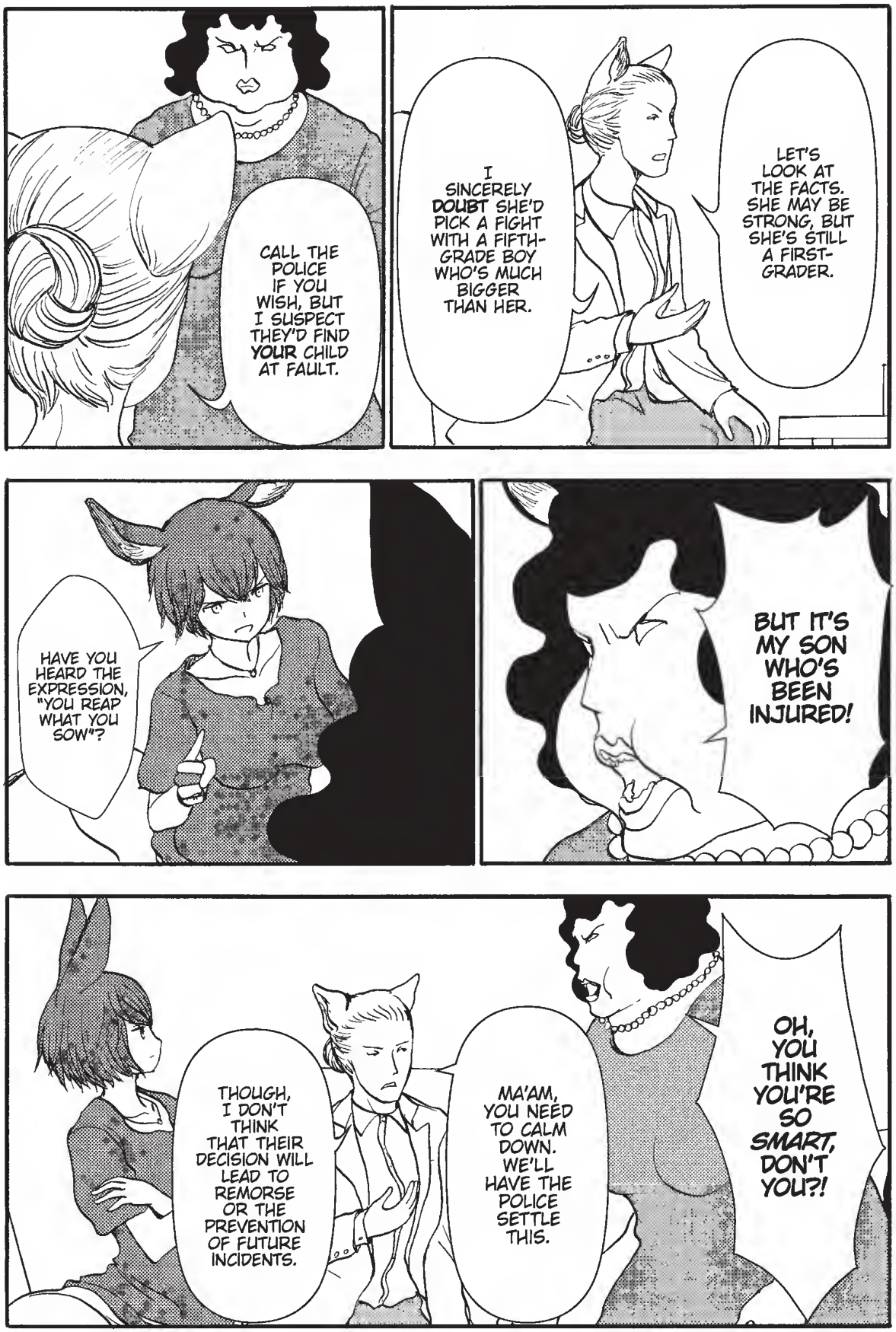
YAH ?!
KA-CRACK
DANGLE
BIG BROTH-ER!
AIEEE!
IT'S BROKEN! MY LEG IS BROKEN!
IT HURTS!!


OKAY, I THINK WE ALL NEED TO CALM DOWN.

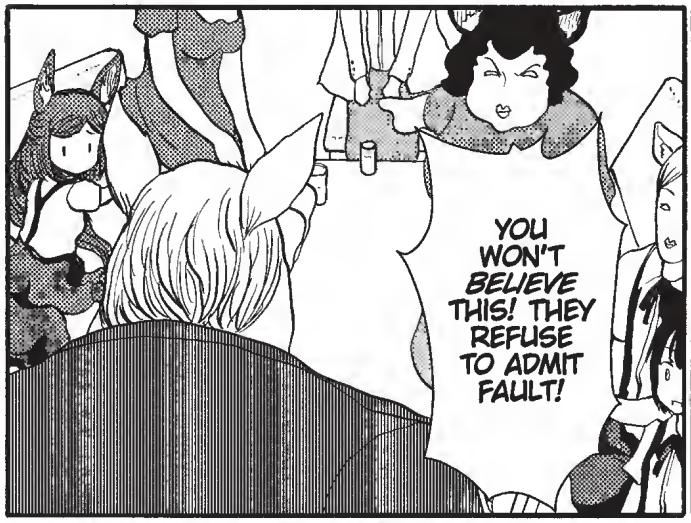

EXCUSE ME? YOUR SON STARTED THE FIGHT.
THAT GIRL SHOULD BE LOCKED UP FOREVER!
I'LL CALL THE POLICE! I'M TAKING YOU TO COURT!
DON'T YOU HAVE ANY-THING TO SAY FOR YOUR-SELF?!

I COULD JUST KILL THIS EVIL LITTLE GIRL!

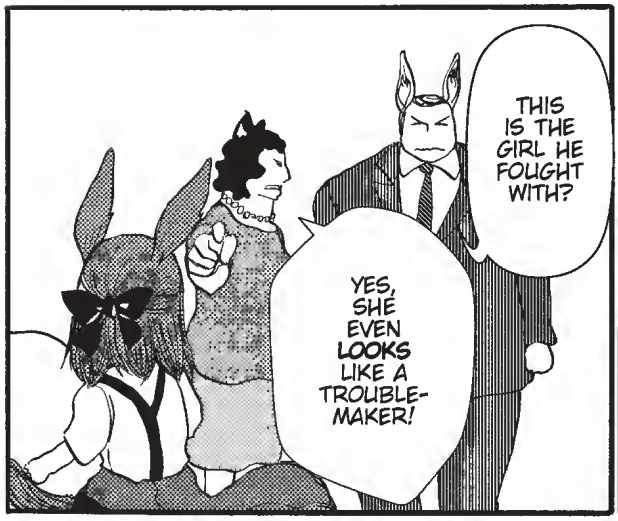

CALM DOWN?! MY BOY HAS A BROKEN LEG!

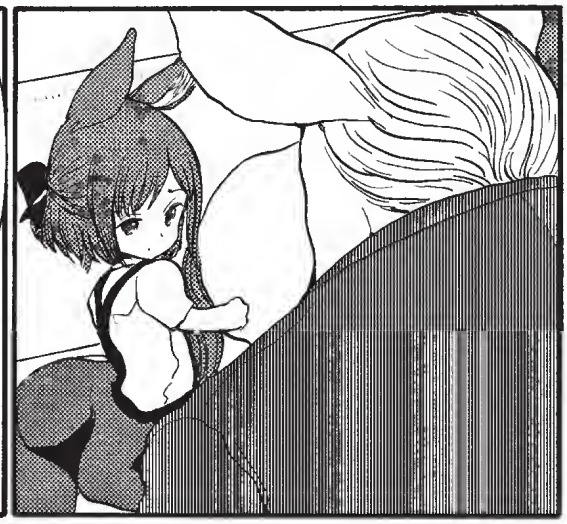

LET'S LOOK AT THE FACTS. SHE MAY BE STRONG, BUT SHE'S STILL A FIRST-GRADER.
I SINCERELY **DOUBT** SHE'D PICK A FIGHT WITH A FIFTH-GRADE BOY WHO'S MUCH BIGGER THAN HER.
CALL THE POLICE IF YOU WISH, BUT I SUSPECT THEY'D FIND **YOUR** CHILD AT FAULT.
BUT IT'S MY SON WHO'S BEEN INJURED!
HAVE YOU HEARD THE EXPRESSION, "YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW"?
OH, YOU THINK YOU'RE SO *SMART*, DON'T YOU?!
MA'AM, YOU NEED TO CALM DOWN. WE'LL HAVE THE POLICE SETTLE THIS.
THOUGH, I DON'T THINK THAT THEIR DECISION WILL LEAD TO REMORSE OR THE PREVENTION OF FUTURE INCIDENTS.

That's not what we're doing.
What's with this lady?
IS THIS A TRICK ?!
YOU'RE TRY-ING TO TRICK ME!
IT'S A COVER UP! YOU'RE PLAYING DIRTY!


YOU WON'T BELIEVE THIS! THEY REFUSE TO ADMIT FAULT!

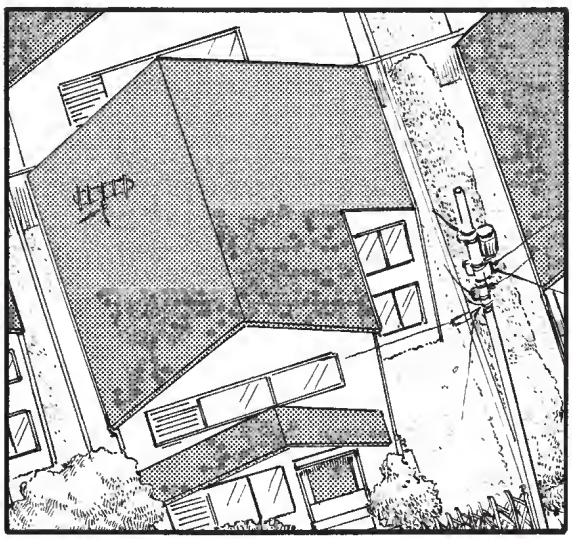
Clop
Clop
HON-EY!
I'M SORRY FOR BEING LATE.
EX-CUSE ME.

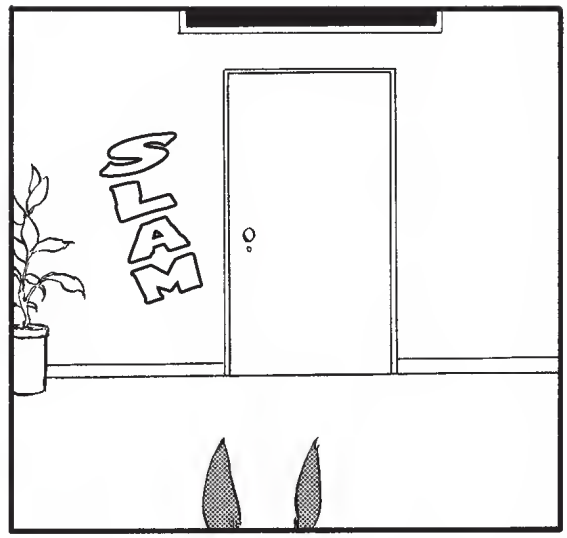

THIS IS THE GIRL HE FOUGHT WITH?
YES, SHE EVEN LOOKS LIKE A TROUBLE-MAKER!

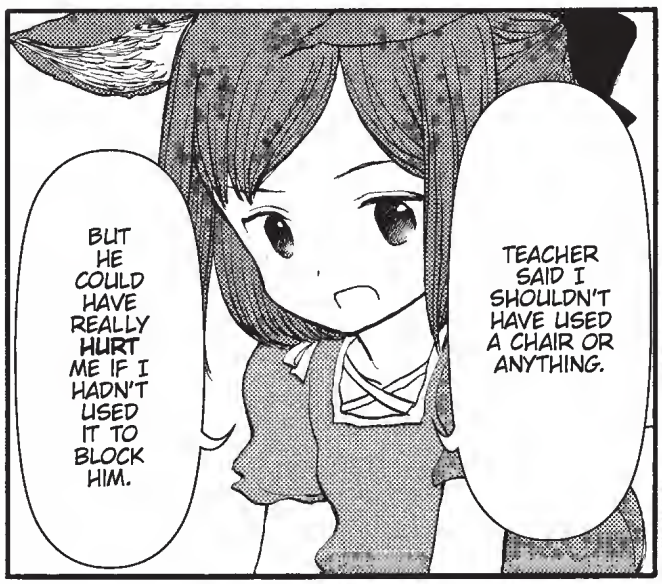


THAT GIRL IS THE ONE TO BLAME!
WHAT ARE YOU *DOING*, HONEY?!
KA-POW
THERE'S *NO* EXCUSE FOR THIS!
THIS IS *NOT* WHY WE'RE LETTING HIM TAKE KARATE!
HOW DARE YOU!
YOU TRIED TO FIGHT THAT LITTLE KID?

SHE HURT OUR BOY!
YOUR DAUGHTER SEEMS TO BE UNHARMED. I'M GLAD.
BUT THAT KID SWUNG A CHAIR AT--
EVEN WITH A CHAIR, SHE'S HALF HIS AGE!
I'M SORRY THAT I'VE NEGLECTED MY FAMILY BECAUSE OF MY WORK.
YOU AND I NEED TO DISCUSS THE UPBRINGING OF OUR CHILDREN.
HAD HE SERIOUSLY INJURED HER, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO WAY TO APOLOGIZE.
WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?!
Um, uh...
WE WANT TO OFFER YOU OUR FORMAL APOLOGY, BUT MY WIFE IS TOO UPSET AT THE MOMENT. WE'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE OURSELVES FOR TODAY.




SLAM


TEACHER SAID I SHOULDN'T HAVE USED A CHAIR OR ANYTHING.
BUT HE COULD HAVE REALLY **HURT** ME IF I HADN'T USED IT TO BLOCK HIM.

AND THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED.
WOW, SOUNDS TOUGH.

WELL, **YOU** COULD TAKE KARATE.
BECOMING STRONGER IS AN OPTION.

YOU KNOW, I COULD HAVE **DIED.**
WHAT SHOULD I DO?!
THAT'S A TOUGH QUESTION.

BUT... WHAT IF HE'S WAY STRONG-ER?
IF YOU'RE VERY STRONG, YOU CAN AVOID HURTING THE OTHER PERSON.
WHAT IF YOU RUN?
YOU BOTH COULD GET HURT VERY BADLY.
THAT'S A PROB-LEM.
There, there.
TEACHER SAID I SHOULDN'T FIGHT BACK.
BUT I HAD NOWHERE TO GO TODAY.
EVEN IF I DID, HE'D JUST KEEP TRYING.

HE WOULDN'T REALLY MEAN IT.
SOMEONE LIKE THAT WOULD ONLY SAY SORRY BECAUSE HE HAS TO.
BUT I COULD REALLY GET HURT IF I DON'T DO ANYTHING.
THAT'S A TOUGH ONE.
YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER, EITHER?
WELL, LET ME THINK.
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
YOU USED THE CHAIR IN DEFENSE, BECAUSE YOU KNEW THERE WERE OTHER PEOPLE AROUND YOU.
THAT BOY GOT HURT, BUT I THINK YOU DID THE RIGHT THING.

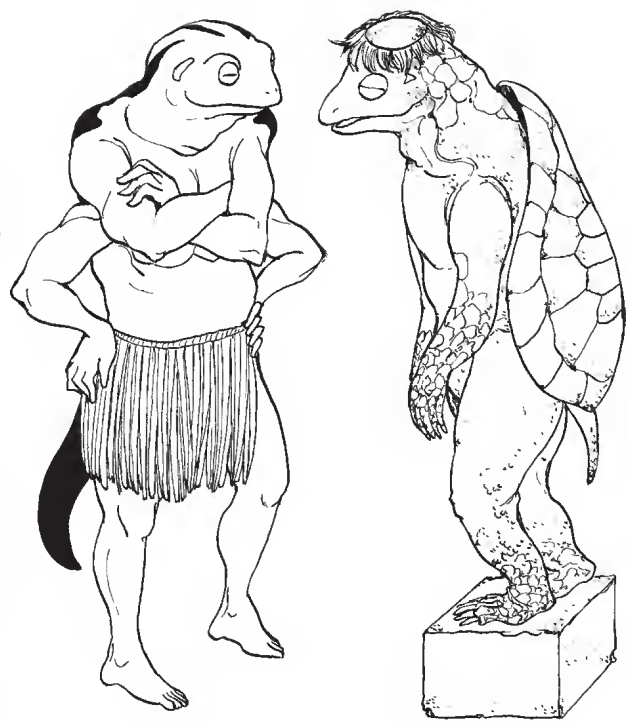
IF HE WAS A SMALL CHILD, HIS KICK WOULDN'T HURT YOU AS MUCH.
BUT, IF A GROUP OF BIG GUYS CAME AFTER YOU, YOU'D HAVE TO RUN OR GET HELP.
BUT DOING THAT WOULDN'T ALWAYS BE THE RIGHT THING.
Ahh.
THIS IS HARD.
I KNOW. IT'S HARD TO FIND THE RIGHT ANSWER EVEN AFTER YOU GROW UP.
...SOME-ONE CAN STILL GET HURT, LIKE TODAY.
EVEN WHEN YOU DO THE RIGHT THING...
WHEN YOU FIND OUT, THAT'S WHEN YOU'VE BECOME A GROWN-UP.
UM.
HOW DO I THINK? HOW DO I KNOW IF IT'S THE RIGHT DECISION?
THAT'S A GROWN-UP WAY OF NOT ANSWER-ING THE QUESTION.
SO YOU'LL HAVE TO THINK HARD ABOUT MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION, EVEN WHEN YOU GROW UP.
THERE ISN'T A CLEAR RIGHT ANSWER LIKE IN A BOOK OF RULES, BUT IT'S ALWAYS OUT THERE SOMEWHERE.

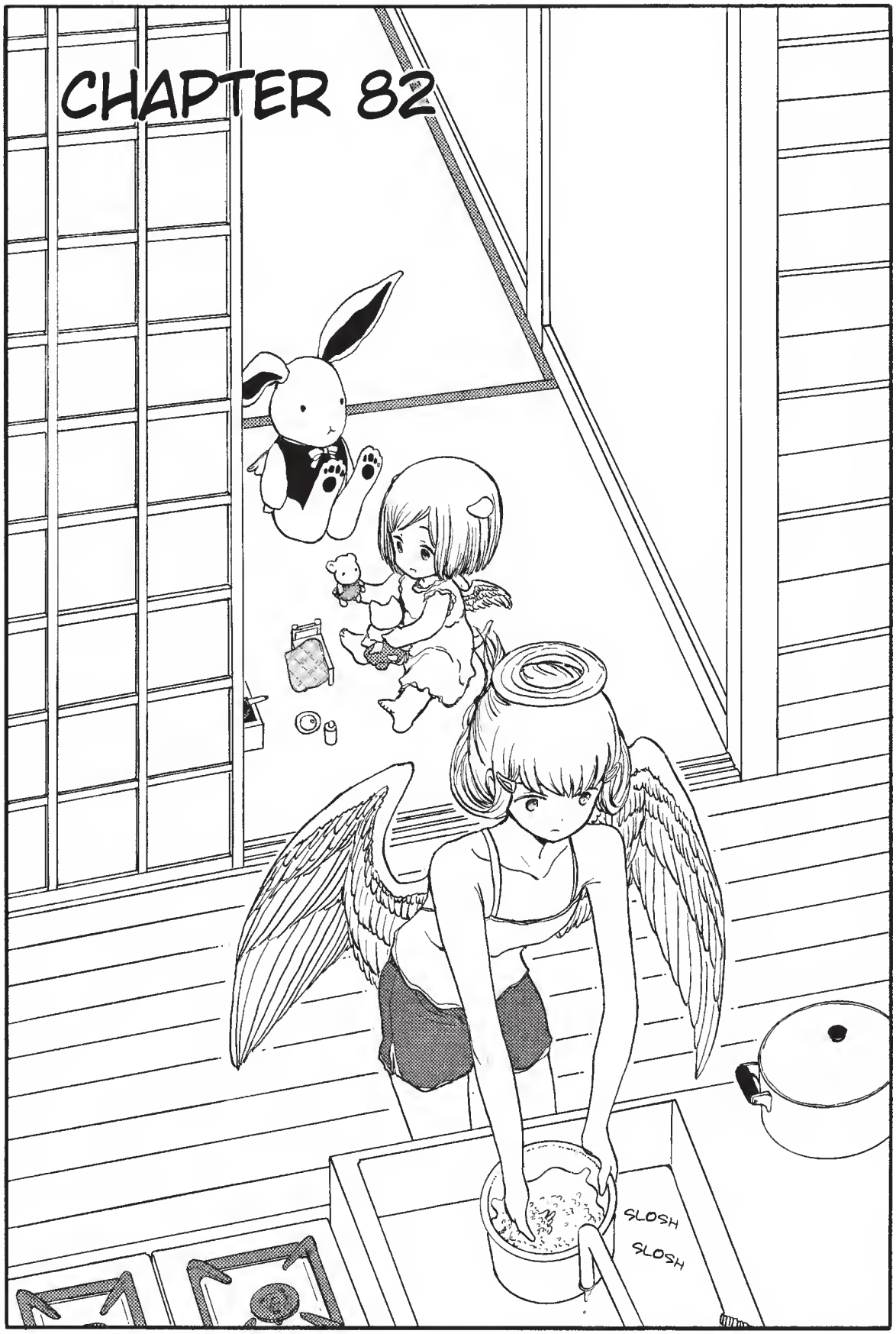
A CentaUr's Life

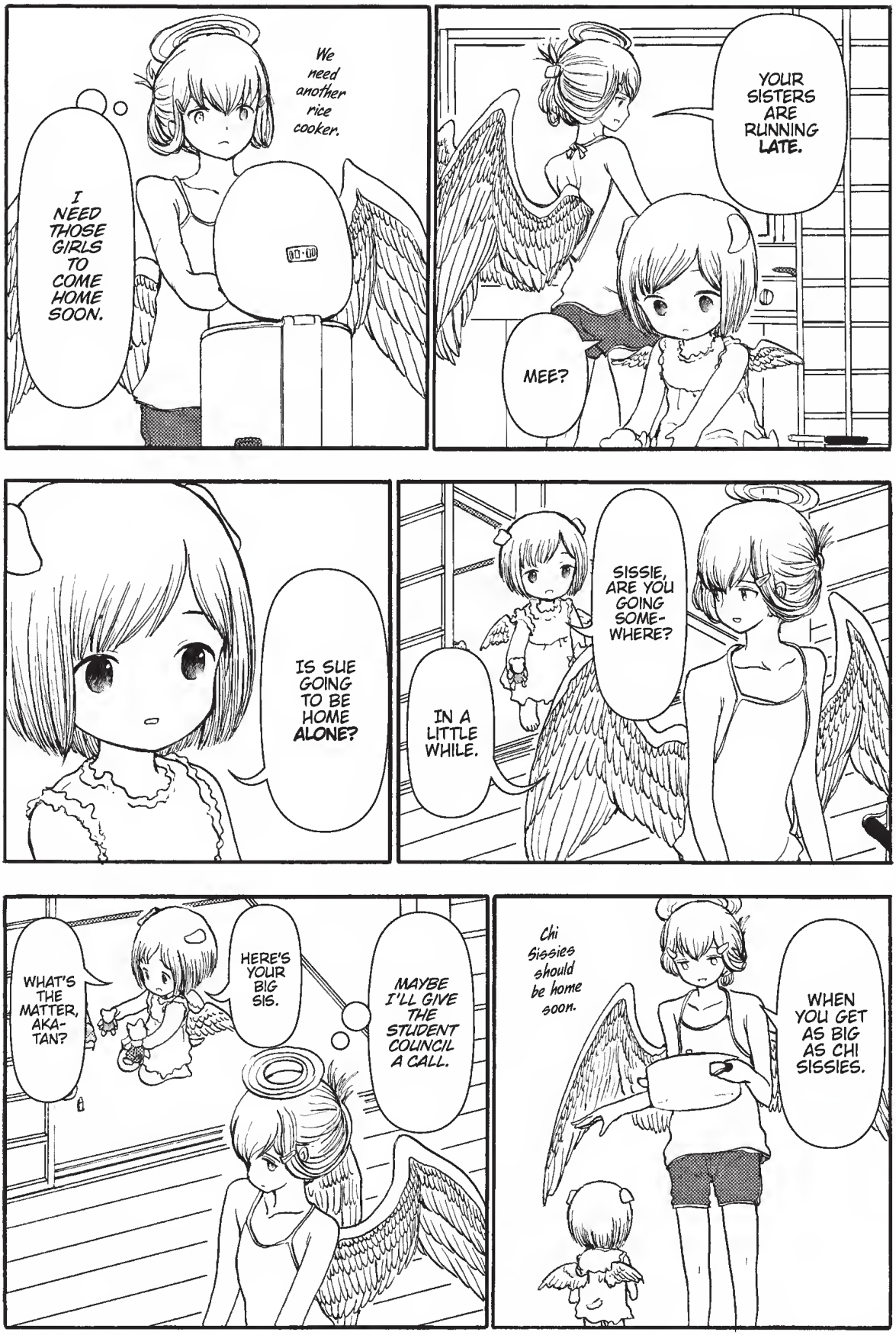
UNDERSTANDING AMPHIBIANFOLK, PART 3: ARE AMPHIBIANFOLK KAPPA?

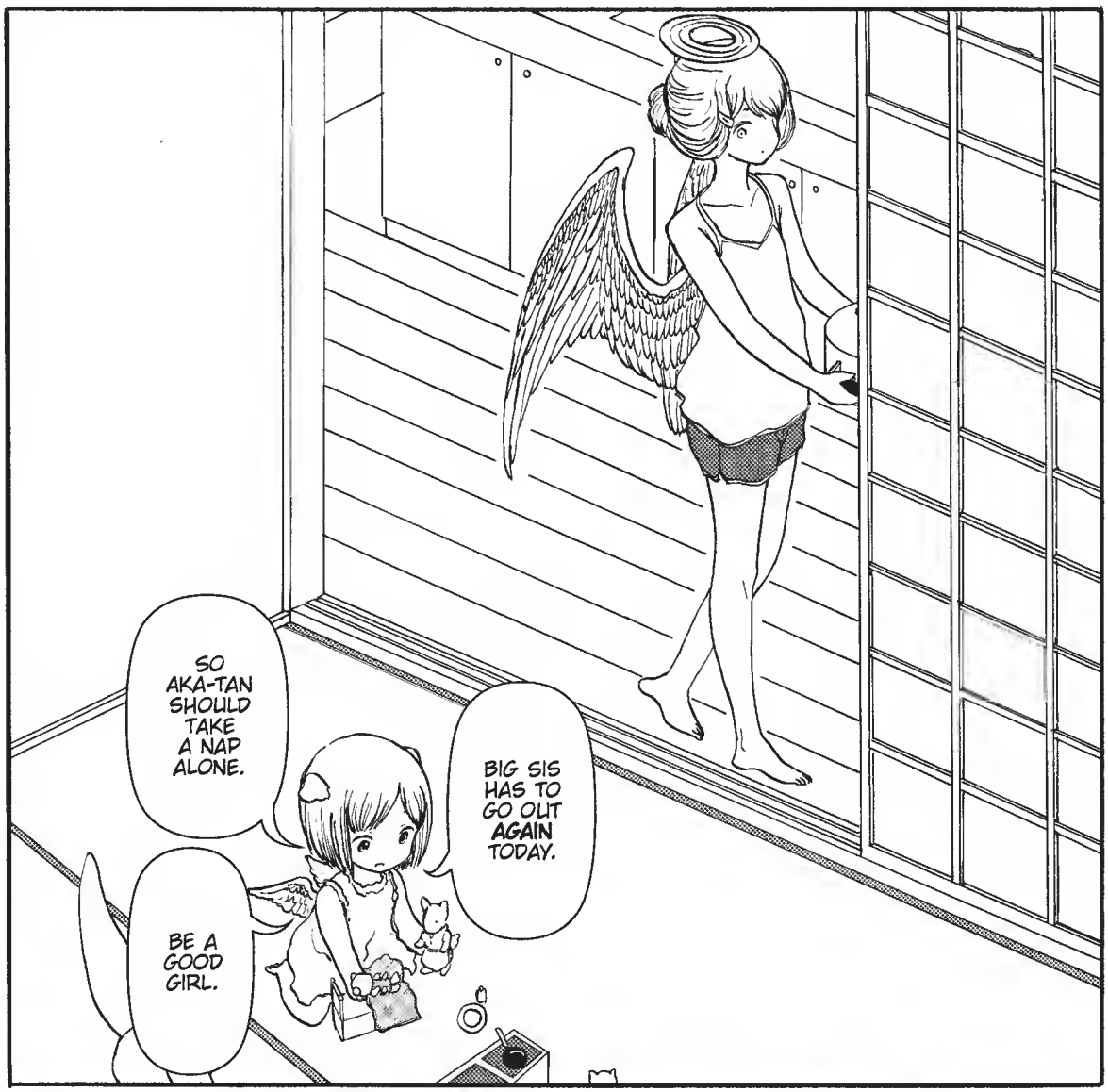
WHILE A KAPPA MIGHT BE CLASSIFIED AS A KIND OF AMPHIBIANFOLK IF IT WERE REAL, THE TRUTH IS THAT KAPPA ONLY EXIST IN FOLKLORE AND MYTH. THIS CREATURE IS VERY POPULAR AND HAS BEEN OPENLY REPORTED BY THE MEDIA IN JAPAN, BUT JUST LIKE MOST URBAN LEGENDS AND HORROR STORIES, KAPPA ARE PURELY FICTIONAL. THERE'S NO HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF ANY REAL AMPHIBIANFOLK IN JAPAN, SO IT'S UNLIKELY THAT THE LEGEND OF THE KAPPA AROSE FROM A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY SURROUNDING TRUE AMPHIBIANFOLK. IN FACT, SINCE KAPPA SUPPOSEDLY CAME IN VARIOUS FORMS RANGING FROM MONKEYS TO HUMAN-TURTLE CHIMERAS, THE MOST LIKELY HYPOTHESIS IS THAT THEIR MODERN IMAGE WAS CREATED BY AN ARTIST.

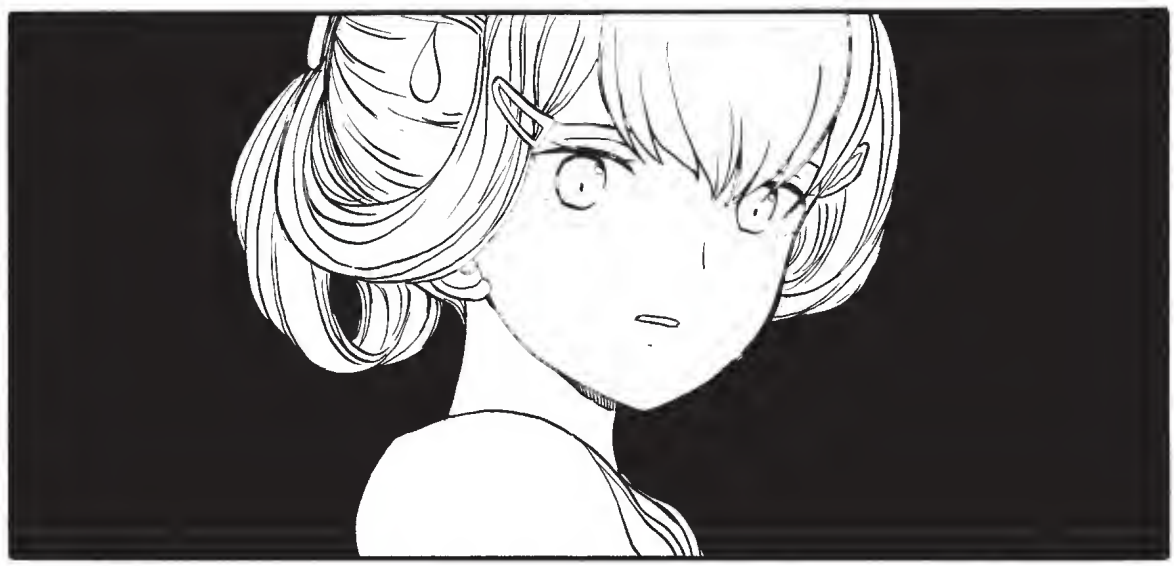
IT IS ONLY IN THIS WAY THAT THERE IS A SMALL POSSIBILITY THAT THE AMPHIBIANFOLK APPEARANCE HAD AN IMPACT ON THE IMAGE OF KAPPA--SPECIFICALLY, THAT THE ARTIST MAY HAVE SEEN AND BEEN INFLUENCED BY A DEPICTION OF AMPHIBIANFOLK. THEY WERE NOT DISCOVERED BY THE WESTERN WORLD UNTIL THE TURN OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, BUT HAD BEEN KNOWN AS LEGEND OR UNIDENTIFIED MYSTERIOUS CREATURES THROUGHOUT SOUTH AMERICA, INCLUDING TAWANTINSUYU, FOR SOME TIME BEFORE THAT. IN PAINTINGS DONE BY ARTISTS FROM MAMMALIAN CIVILIZATION, THEY WERE OCCASIONALLY DEPICTED AS HIDDEN SYMBOLIC ICONS OF PRIMITIVE CHARACTERS.

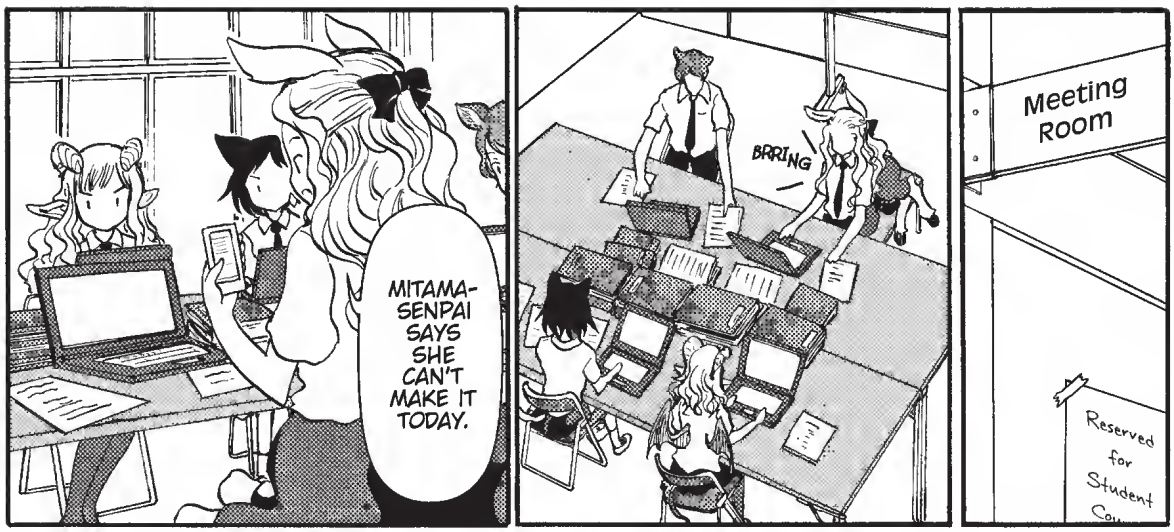


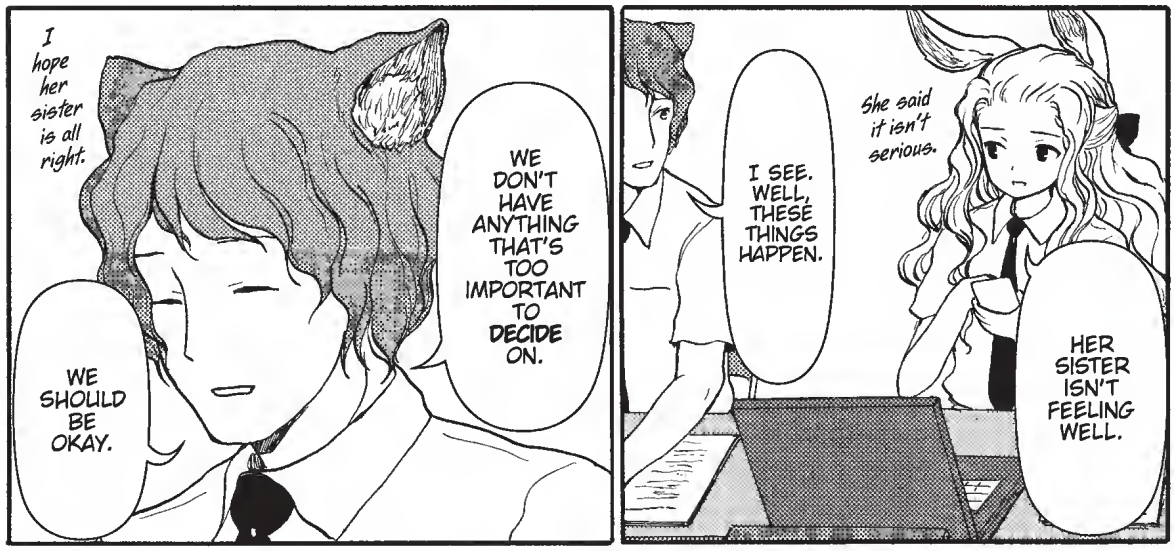

CHAPTER 82
SLOSH
SLOSH

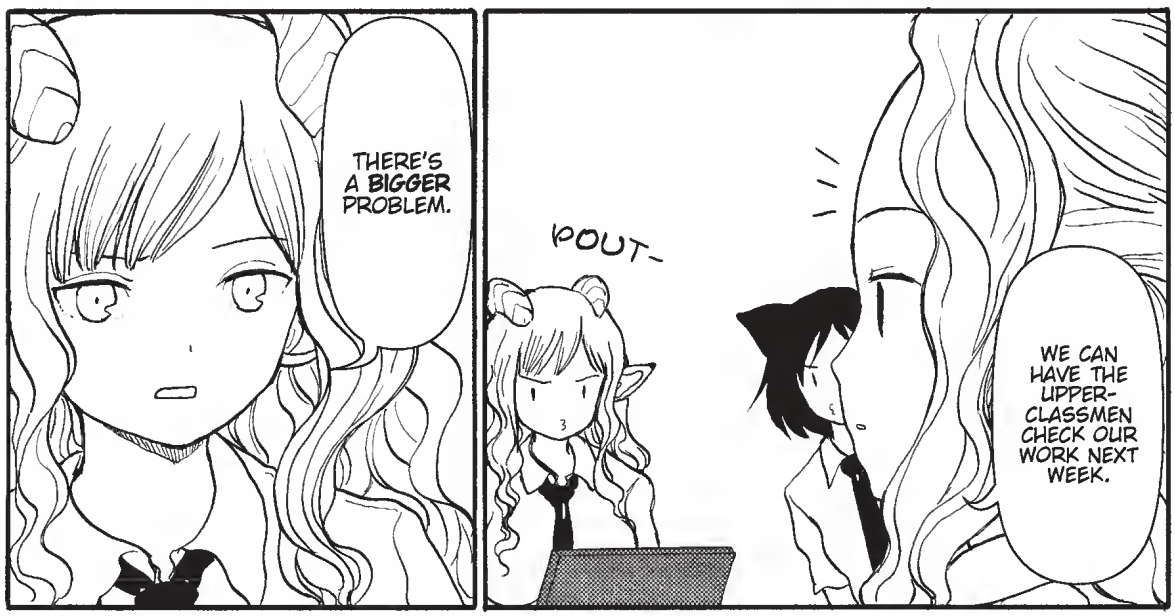

We need another rice cooker.
I NEED THOSE GIRLS TO COME HOME SOON.
YOUR SISTERS ARE RUNNING LATE.
MEE?
IS SHE GOING TO BE HOME ALONE?
SISSIE, ARE YOU GOING SOME-WHERE?
IN A LITTLE WHILE.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, AKA-TAN?
HERE'S YOUR BIG SIS.
MAYBE I'LL GIVE THE STUDENT COUNCIL A CALL.
Chi Sissies should be home soon.
WHEN YOU GET AS BIG AS CHI SISSIES.

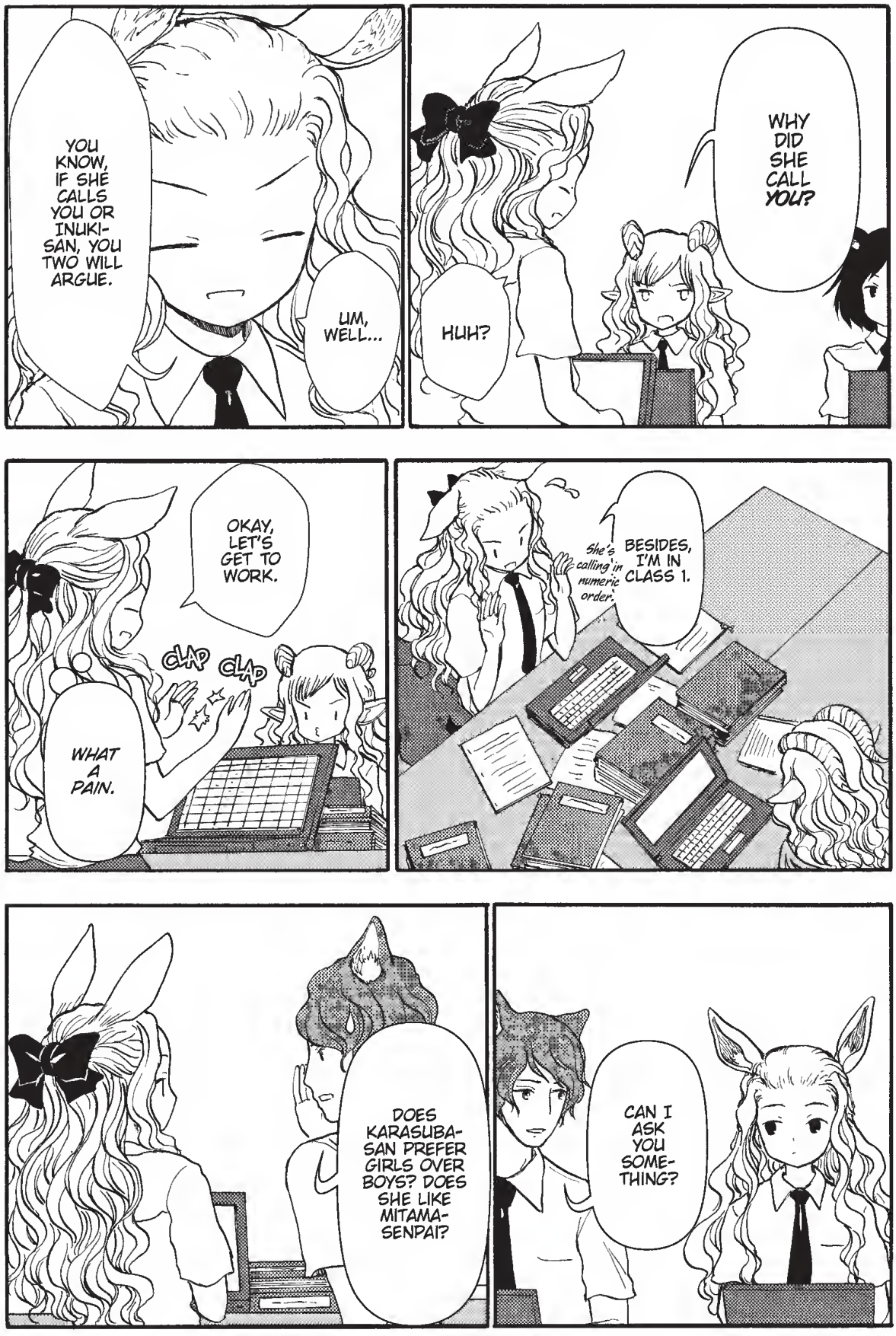

BIG SIS HAS TO GO OUT AGAIN TODAY.
SO AKA-TAN SHOULD TAKE A NAP ALONE.
BE A GOOD GIRL.




MITAMA-SENPAI SAYS SHE CAN'T MAKE IT TODAY.
BRRING
Meeting Room
Reserved for Student

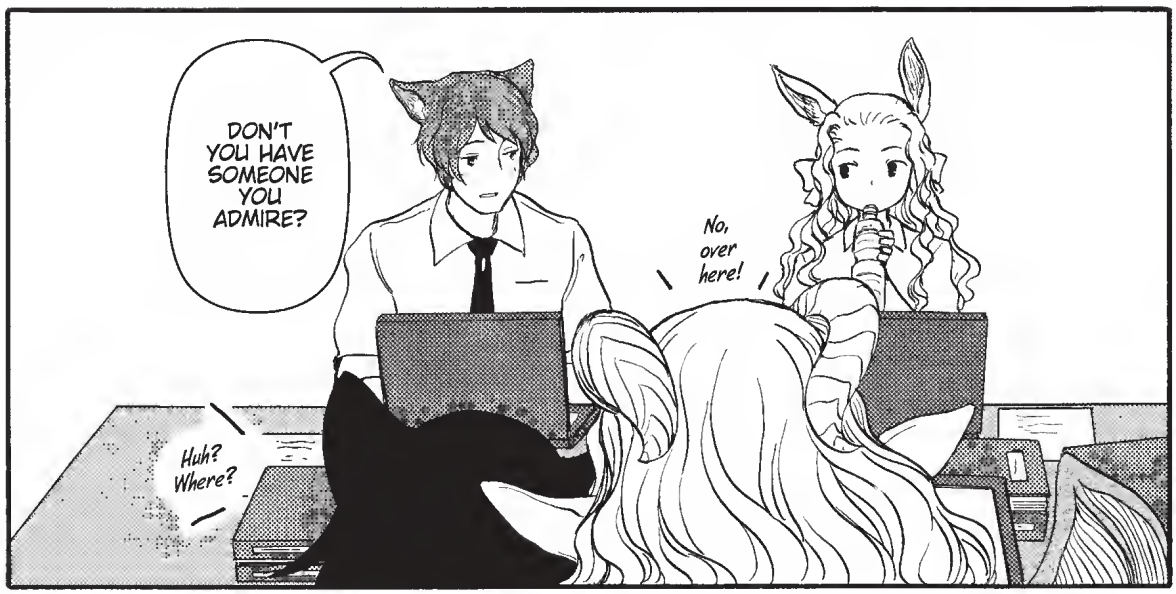

I hope her sister is all right.
WE SHOULD BE OKAY.
WE DON'T HAVE ANYTHING THAT'S TOO IMPORTANT TO DECIDE ON.
She said it isn't serious.
I SEE. WELL, THESE THINGS HAPPEN.
HER SISTER ISN'T FEELING WELL.


THERE'S A BIGGER PROBLEM.
POUT-
WE CAN HAVE THE UPPER-CLASSMEN CHECK OUR WORK NEXT WEEK.

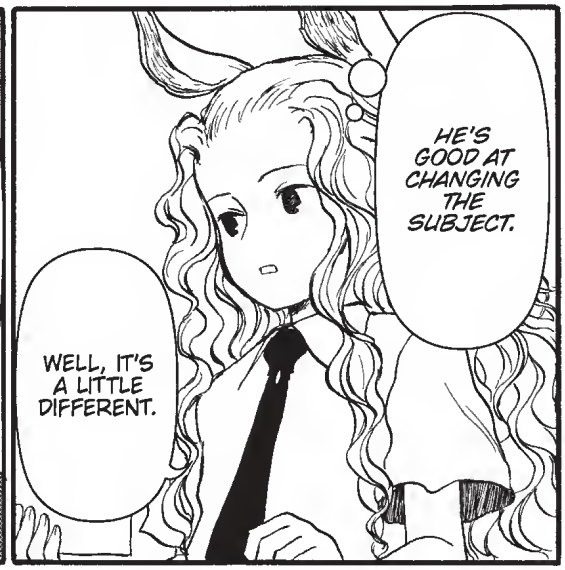

YOU KNOW, IF SHE CALLS YOU OR INUKI-SAN, YOU TWO WILL ARGUE.
UM, WELL...
HUH?
WHY DID SHE CALL YOU?
OKAY, LET'S GET TO WORK.
CLAP
CLAP
WHAT A PAIN.
She's calling in numeric order.
BESIDES, I'M IN CLASS 1.
DOES KARASUBA-SAN PREFER GIRLS OVER BOYS? DOES SHE LIKE MITAMA-SENPAI?
CAN I ASK YOU SOME-THING?

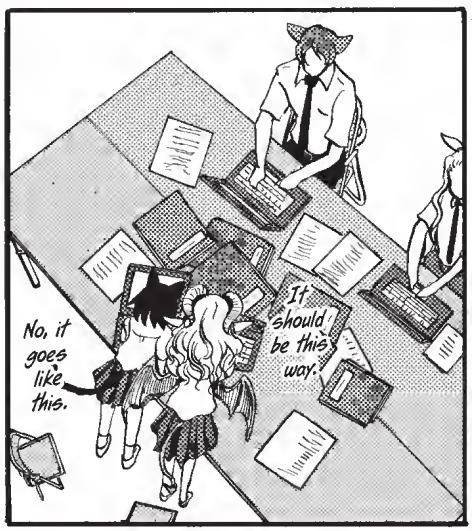
I THINK SHE HAS ADMIRATION FOR HER.
HMM.
THAT MAKES SENSE. I THINK MITAMA-SENPAI IS COOL, TOO.
THAT SEEMS TO BE THE REASON WHY SHE DECIDED TO JOIN THIS STUDENT COUNCIL.
SHE WAS IN THE STUDENT COUNCIL IN MIDDLE SCHOOL, AND SAW MITAMA-SENPAI WORK UP CLOSE.
ARE YOU INTER-ESTED IN KARASUBA-SAN?
HUH?

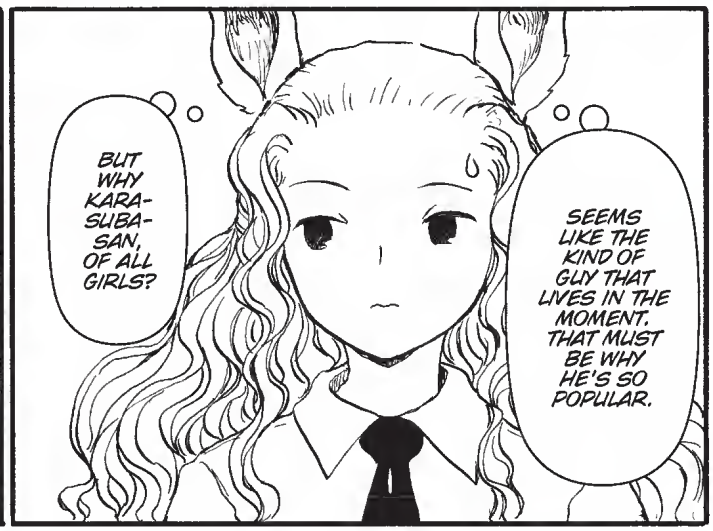
YEAH.
Well, um, uh...
That annoys me.
I GUESS THIS MEANS I'M JUST NORMAL.
Well, she is eccentric.
I didn't miscalculate.
Our numbers are off.
KARASUBA-SAN IS DIFFERENT FROM ANY OF THE GIRLS I'VE KNOWN.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
UH-HUH.
N-NO!
YEAH, I CAN'T TAKE MY EYES--
YOU'RE RIGHT. I HAVEN'T SEEN ANYONE WITH SUCH A HUGE CHEST.
That's a lie, though.


DON'T YOU HAVE SOMEONE YOU ADMIRE?
Huh? Where?
No, over here!

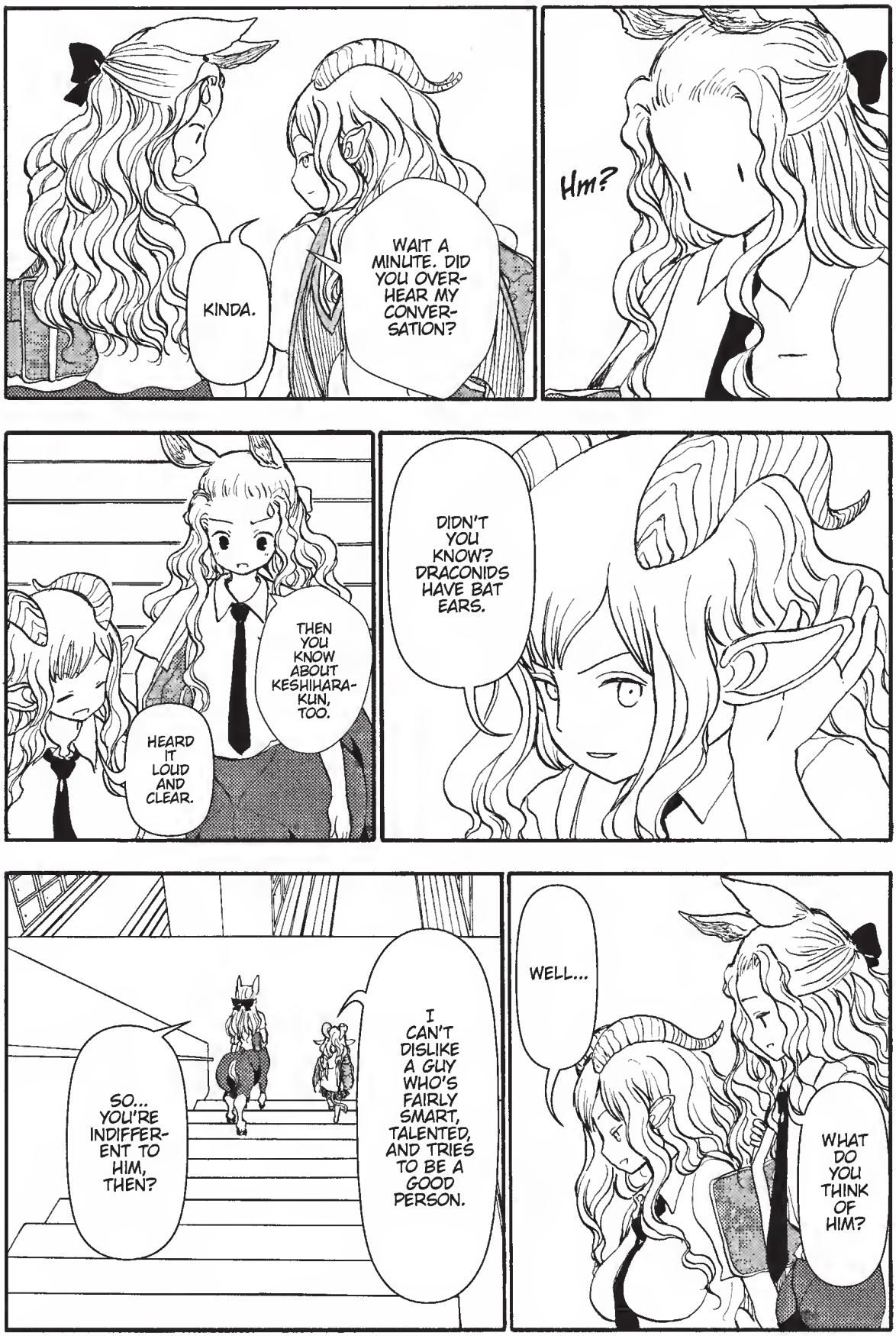
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL.
I FEEL STUPID FOR TAKING IT SO SERIOUSLY.
IT'S MY FRIEND FROM A KYUDO DOJO I GO TO. SHE ALWAYS DOES WELL, EVEN THOUGH SHE HAS NO MOTIVATION.


WELL, IT'S A LITTLE DIFFERENT.
HE'S GOOD AT CHANGING THE SUBJECT.


No, it goes like this.
It should be this way.


BUT WHY KARASUBA-SAN, OF ALL GIRLS?
SEEMS LIKE THE KIND OF GUY THAT LIVES IN THE MOMENT. THAT MUST BE WHY HE'S SO POPULAR.

THAT ENDED PRETTY QUICKLY.
EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT THEY'RE DOING.
Except Inuki.
THAT REMINDS ME, YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT YOUR ADMIRATION FOR KIMIHARA-SENPAI.
SHE SOUNDS LIKE AN AMAZING PERSON.
HELLO, KIMI-HARA-SENPAI!
There's no need to be so formal.
Hi!
OH, REALLY? I DON'T KNOW HOW SHE IS IN SCHOOL, THOUGH.
What did she do in middle school?

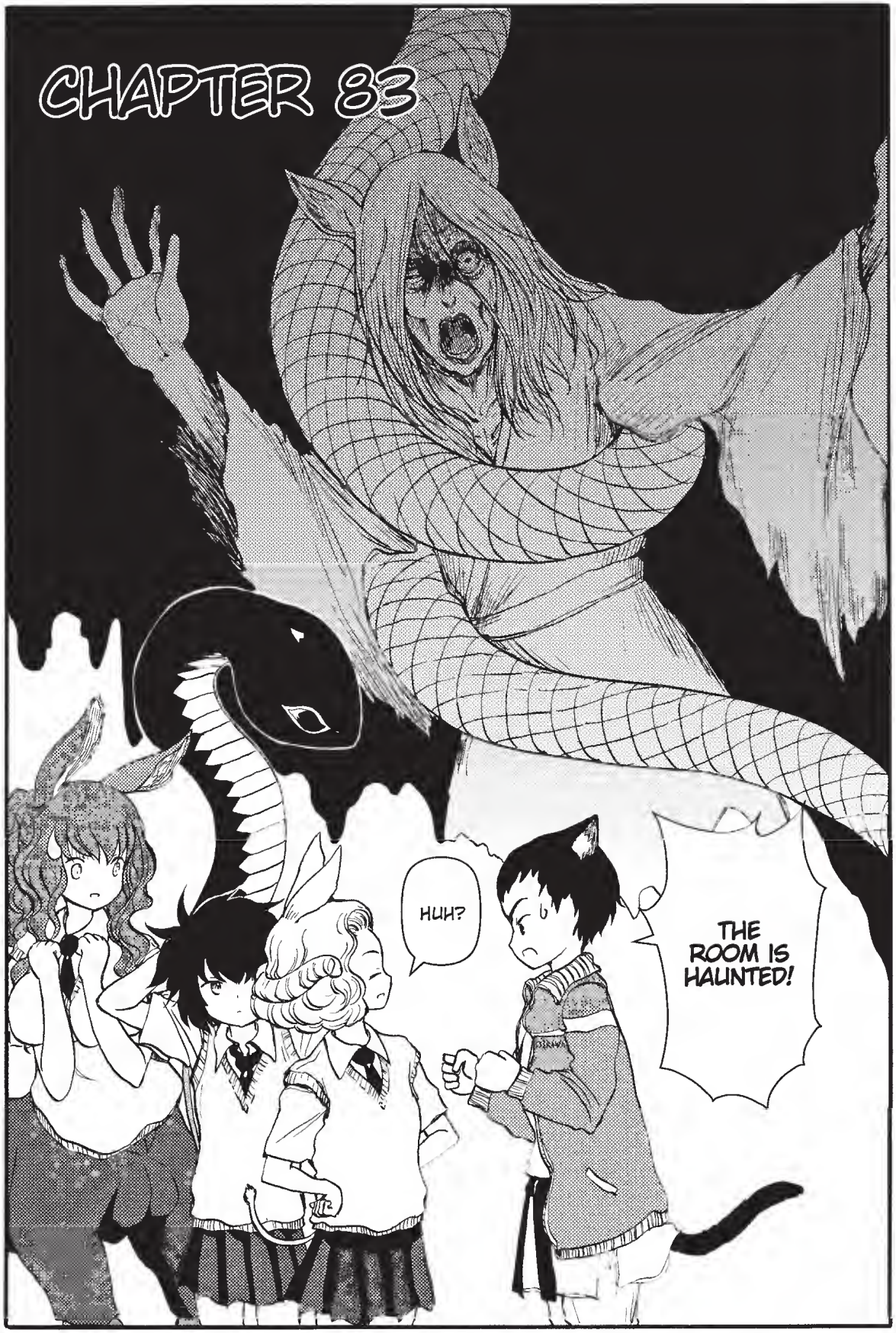

WAIT A MINUTE. DID YOU OVER-HEAR MY CONVER-SATION?
KINDA.
Hm?
THEN YOU KNOW ABOUT KESHIHARA-KUN, TOO.
HEARD IT LOUD AND CLEAR.
DIDN'T YOU KNOW? DRACONIDS HAVE BAT EARS.
I CAN'T DISLIKE A GUY WHO'S FAIRLY SMART, TALENTED, AND TRIES TO BE A GOOD PERSON.
SO... YOU'RE INDIFFER-ENT TO HIM, THEN?
WELL...
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HIM?

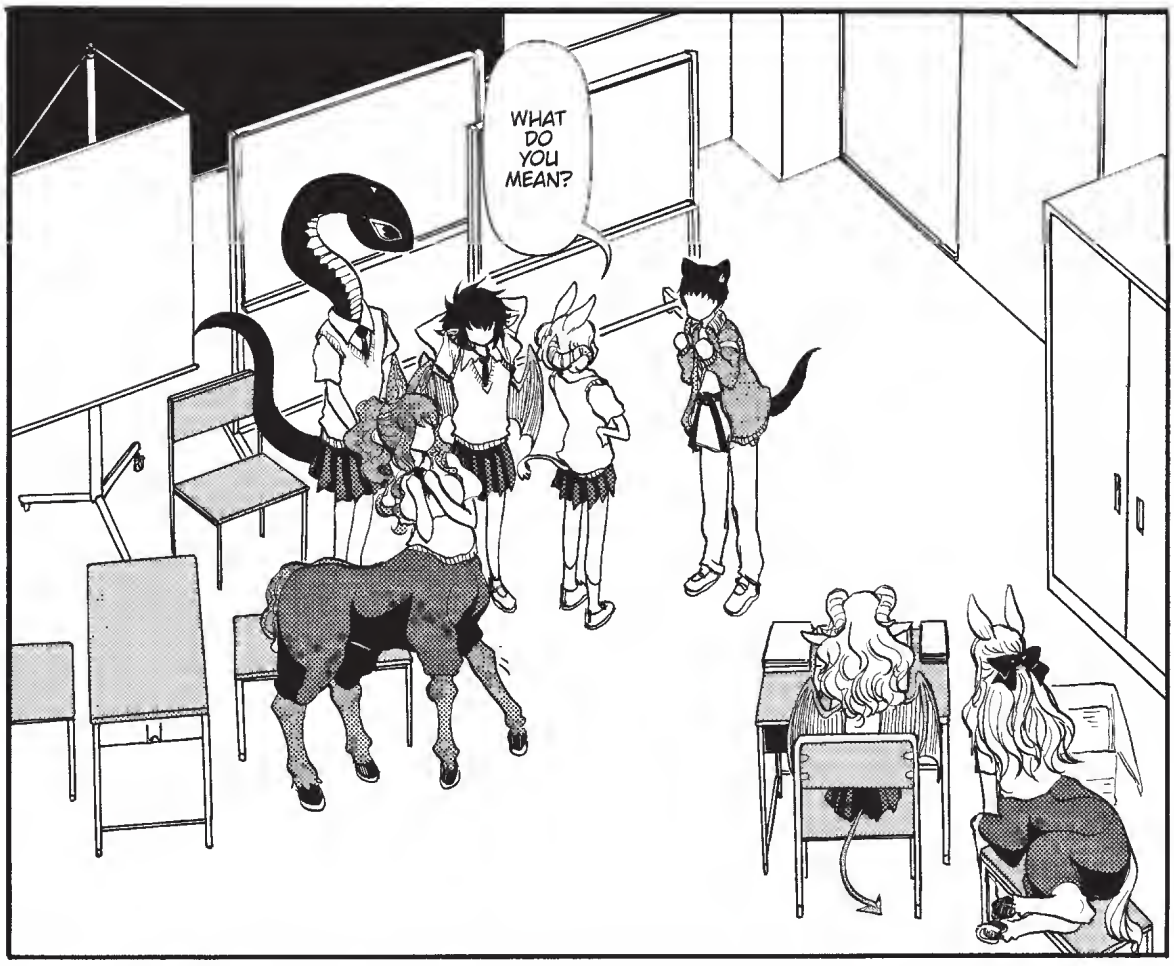
A CentaUr's Life

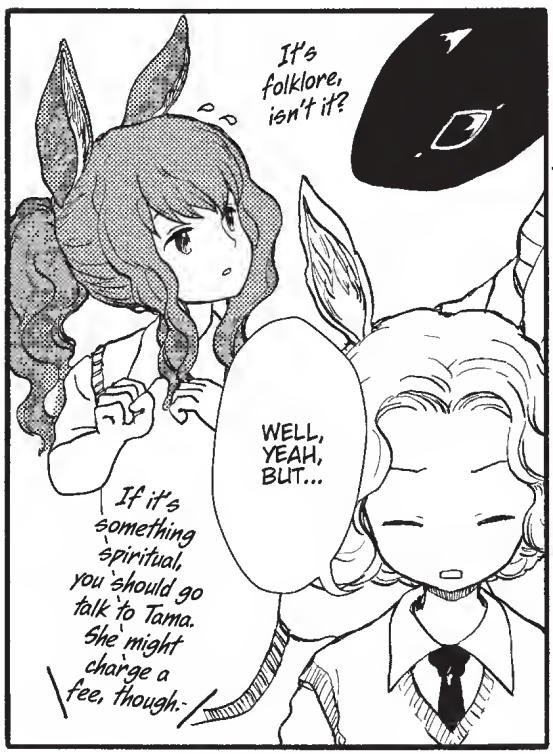
UNDERSTANDING AMPHIBIANFOLK PART 4: AMPHIBIANFOLK SOCIETY

AMPHIBIANFOLK DIDN'T HAVE A RECOGNIZED COUNTRY UNTIL VERY RECENTLY. IT'S BELIEVED THAT THEY WERE A TRIBAL SOCIETY, WITH EACH TRIBE MADE UP OF MULTIPLE FAMILIES THRIVING ON FISHING, HUNTING, AND GATHERING. THE FAMILY UNIT INCLUDES THE ENTIRE EXTENDED FAMILY RATHER THAN SIMPLY THE NUCLEAR FAMILY, AND THEIR REPRODUCTION IS PROLIFIC--IT IS NOT UNCOMMON FOR AN AMPHIBIANFOLK WOMAN TO HAVE MORE THAN TEN CHILDREN. THEIR TROPICAL RAINFOREST HOME IS NOT IDEAL FOR FARMING, AS IT IS DIFFICULT FOR CROPS TO RISE FROM MASSES OF DECOMPOSED FALLEN LEAVES. NEITHER POVERTY NOR SOCIAL STATUS WERE KNOWN TO THEM; IT WAS THE QUINTESSENTIAL PRIMITIVE FORAGING SOCIETY.

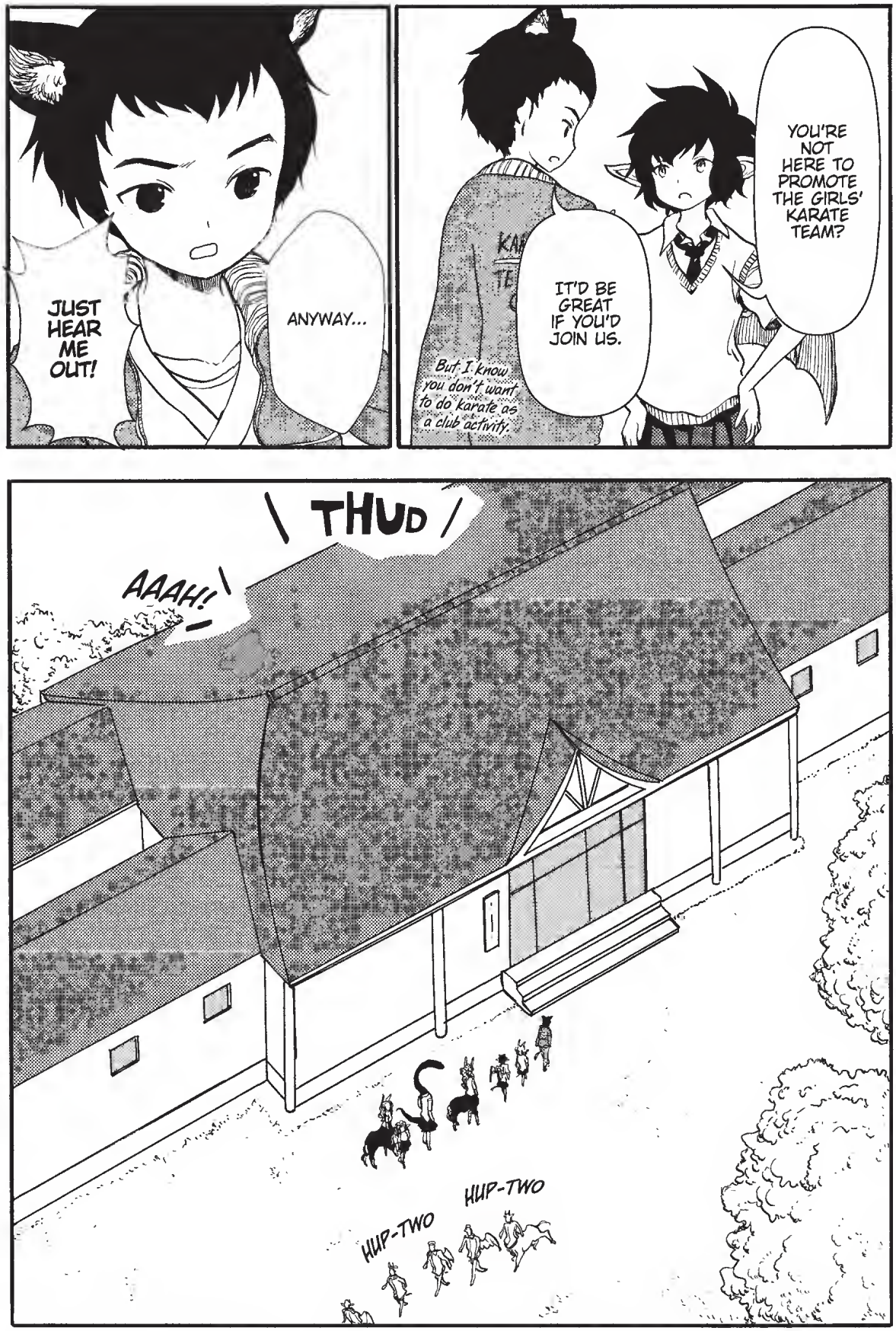
IN RECENT YEARS, HOWEVER, THERE WERE SIGNS OF THE TRIBES MERGING. THE REASON FOR THIS SEEMS TO BE RELATED TO FLOURISHING TRADE WITH MAMMALIANS, WHICH FOR THE AMPHIBIANFOLK BROUGHT ABOUT AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF SAVING THEIR WEALTH AND THE NEED FOR LEADERS WHO COULD HANDLE NEW SITUATIONS WITH WISDOM. THERE'S SPECULATION THAT THE AMPHIBIANFOLK-LED, ANTI-GOVERNMENT MILITIA GROUP CTHULCTHUL IS CURRENTLY PLAYING THE ROLE OF A CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, CREATING A UNIFIED STATE FOR THEIR PEOPLE. THEIR UNPRECEDENTED ATTACKS AGAINST MAMMALIAN SOCIETY AND MODERN MILITARY FORCE DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY HAVE STRONG ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP. SOME EXPERTS SAY THAT MAMMALIANS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CREATION OF MODERN AMPHIBIANFOLK SOCIETY, INCLUDING CTHULCTHUL.

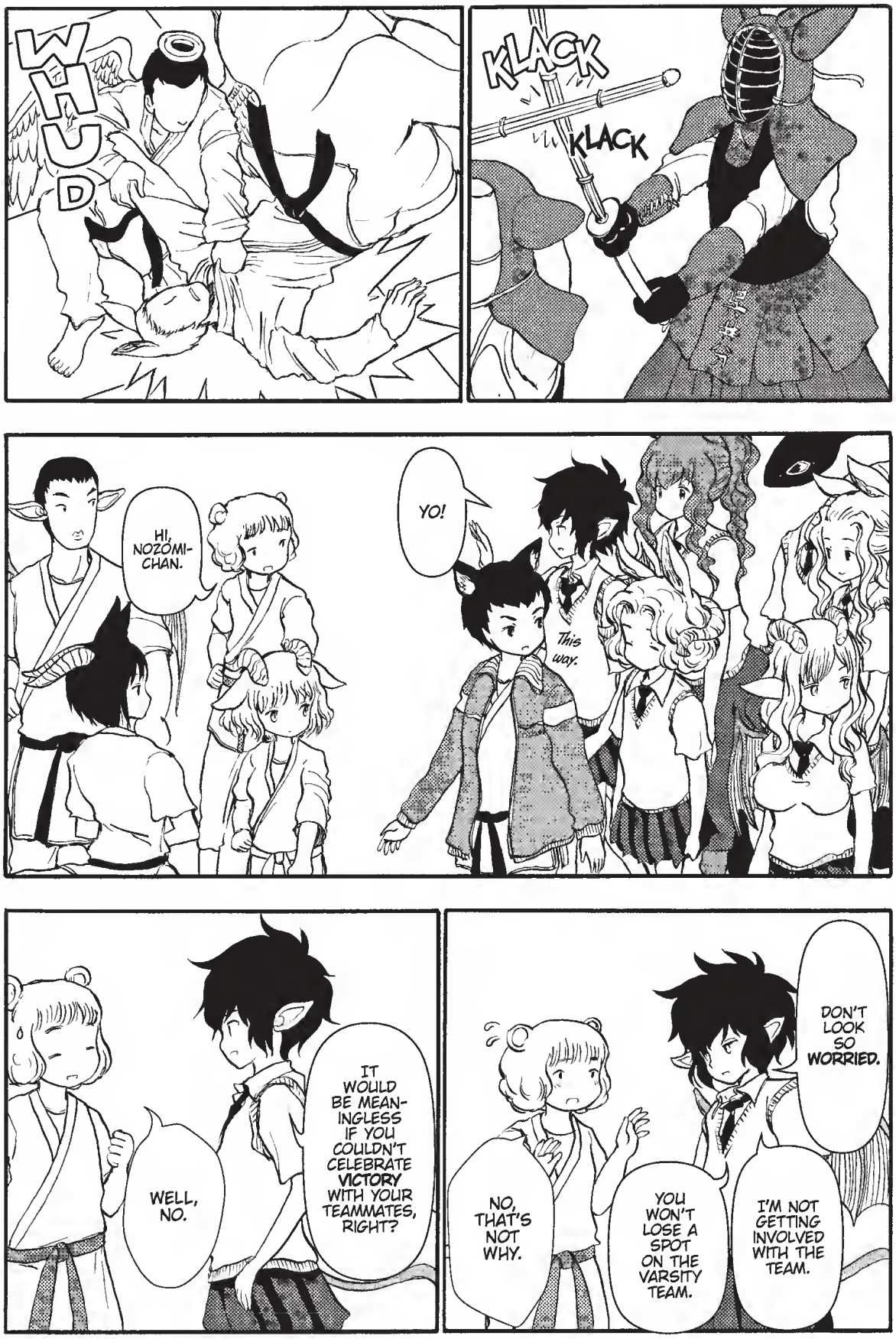

CHAPTER 83
HUH?
THE ROOM IS HAUNTED!


WHAT DO YOU MEAN?


It's folklore, isn't it?
WELL, YEAH, BUT...
If it's something spiritual, you should go talk to Tama. She might charge a fee, though.

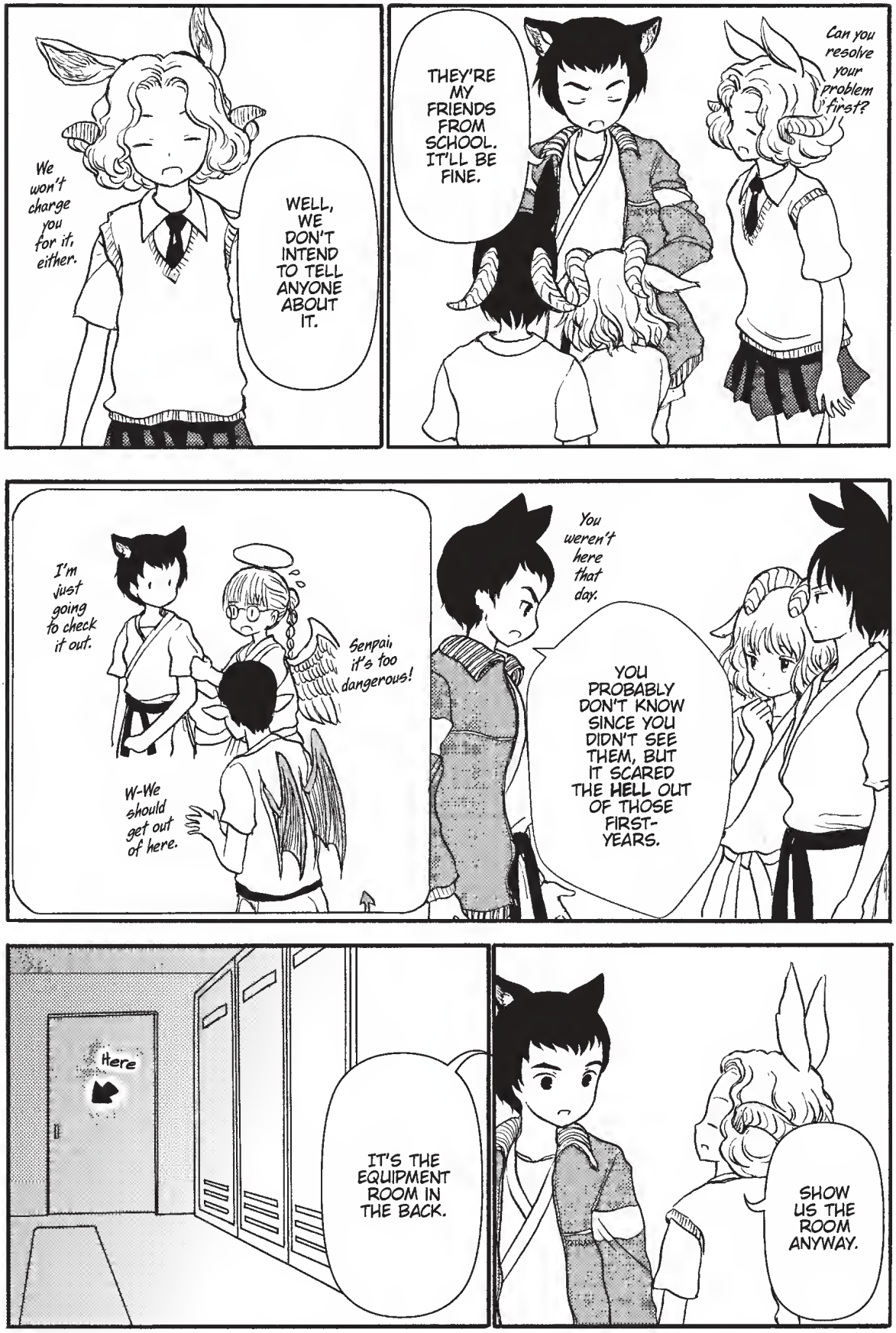
COME ON! ISN'T THIS THE OCCULT CLUB?!
OIKAWA, YOU BELIEVE IN GHOSTS?

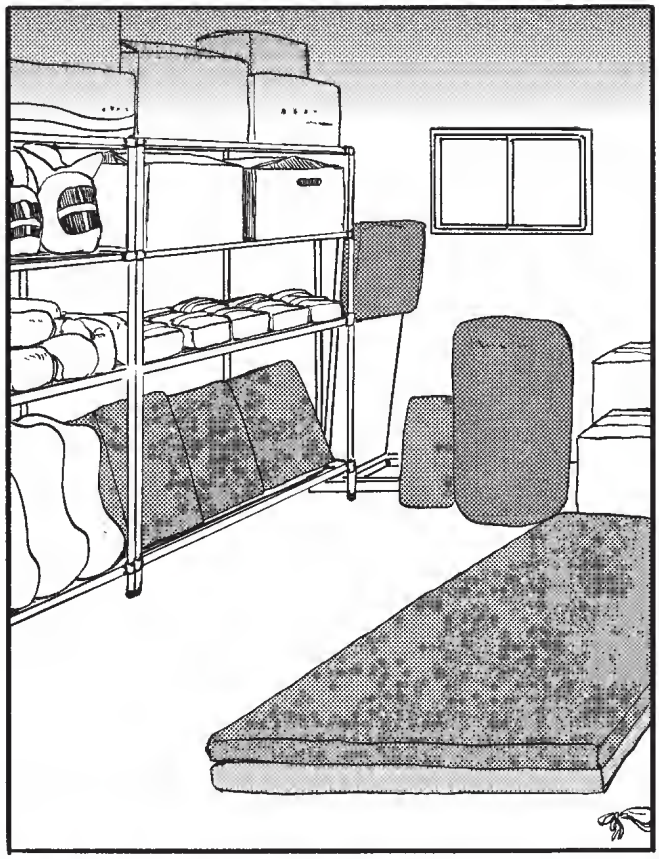

JUST HEAR ME OUT!
ANYWAY...
But I know you don't want to do karate as a club activity.
IT'D BE GREAT IF YOU'D JOIN US.
YOU'RE NOT HERE TO PROMOTE THE GIRLS' KARATE TEAM?
THUD
AAAH!
HUP-TWO
HUP-TWO


WHUD
KLACK
KLACK
HI, NOZOMI-CHAN.
YO!
This way.
IT WOULD BE MEAN-INGLESS IF YOU COULDN'T CELEBRATE VICTORY WITH YOUR TEAMMATES, RIGHT?
WELL, NO.
DON'T LOOK SO WORRIED.
I'M NOT GETTING INVOLVED WITH THE TEAM.
YOU WON'T LOSE A SPOT ON THE VARSITY TEAM.
NO, THAT'S NOT WHY.

AN ENERGETIC FRESHMAN, HUH?
DO YOU WANT TO SPAR WITH ME?
YES. YES I DO.
A Girl
DART
HEY, SENPAI.
YOU TALK BIG, BUT ARE YOU STRONGER THAN KONOMI-SENPAI?
Think before you talk!
THEN WHY ARE THEY HERE?
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!
I DIDN'T BRING HER TO SPAR!
I WANTED TO HAVE SOME EXPERTS TAKE A LOOK AT IT.
THIS IS ABOUT THE GHOST THAT SHOWS UP IN OUR EQUIPMENT ROOM.

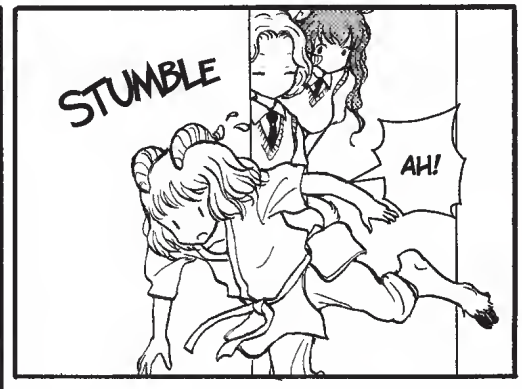
Huh?
It's danger-ous.
THE FIRST-YEARS WERE TOO SCARED TO GO IN THERE.
WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO, TACHI-HARA?
YOSHIKA, YOU'RE OVER-REACTING.
And it's free.
THEY'RE IN THE OCCULT CLUB. THEY SHOULD KNOW A FEW TRICKS.
BUT DO THESE GIRLS HAVE THE ABILITY TO RESOLVE THAT PROBLEM?
HMPH.
YOU'RE TAKING HER SIDE, SHINAKO?
I'M NOT SURE ABOUT BRINGING STRANGERS INTO THIS, EITHER.

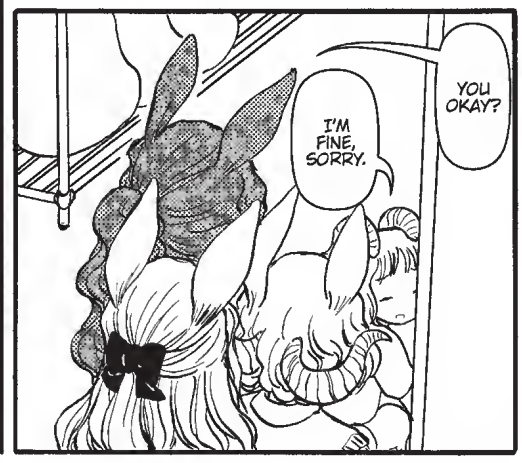

We won't charge you for it, either.
WELL, WE DON'T INTEND TO TELL ANYONE ABOUT IT.
THEY'RE MY FRIENDS FROM SCHOOL. IT'LL BE FINE.
Can you resolve your problem first?
I'm just going to check it out.
Senpai, it's too dangerous!
W-We should get out of here.
You weren't here that day.
YOU PROBABLY DON'T KNOW SINCE YOU DIDN'T SEE THEM, BUT IT SCARED THE HELL OUT OF THOSE FIRST-YEARS.
Here
IT'S THE EQUIPMENT ROOM IN THE BACK.
SHOW US THE ROOM ANYWAY.



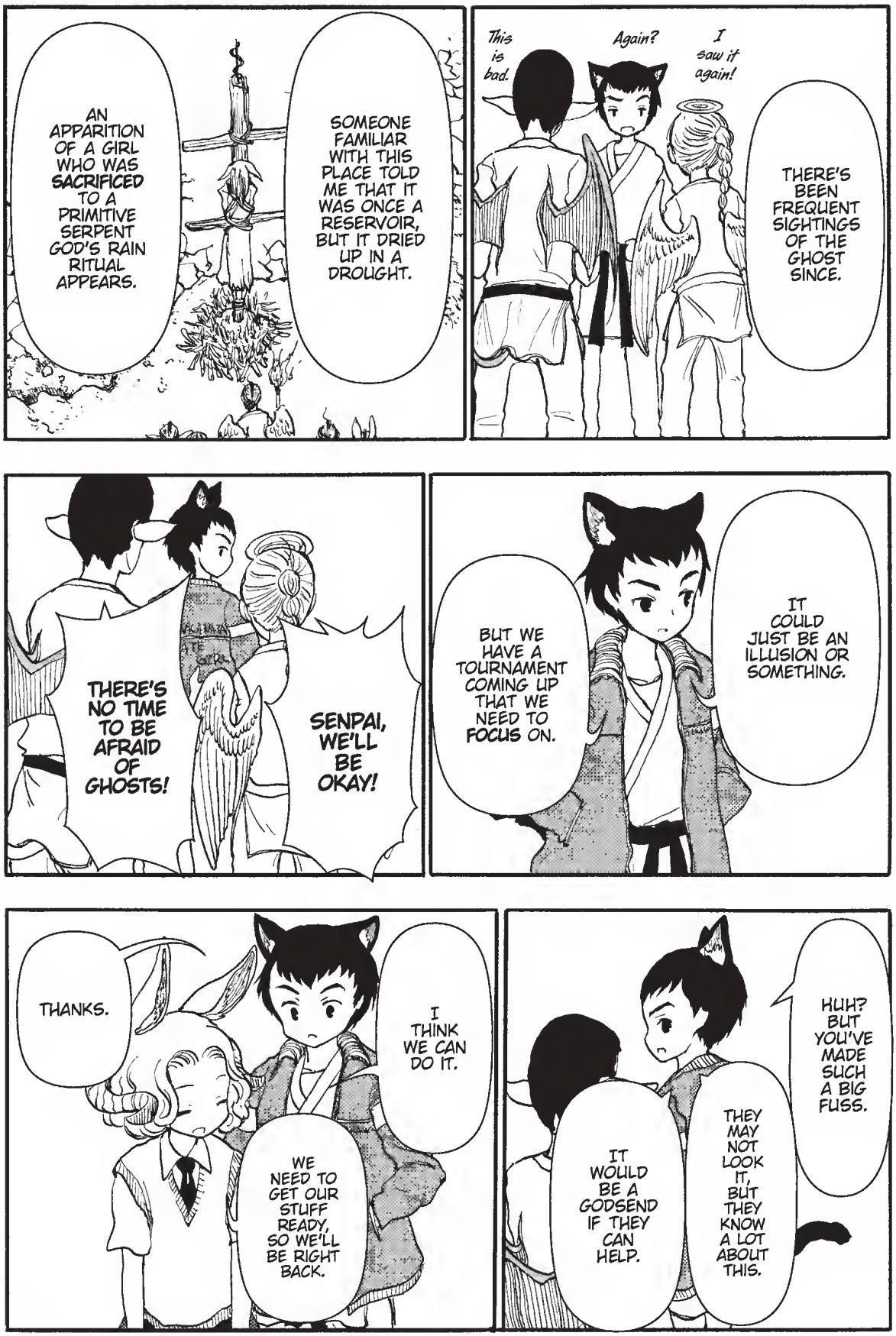
It's tricky because it sticks.
UH, I'LL OPEN THE DOOR.

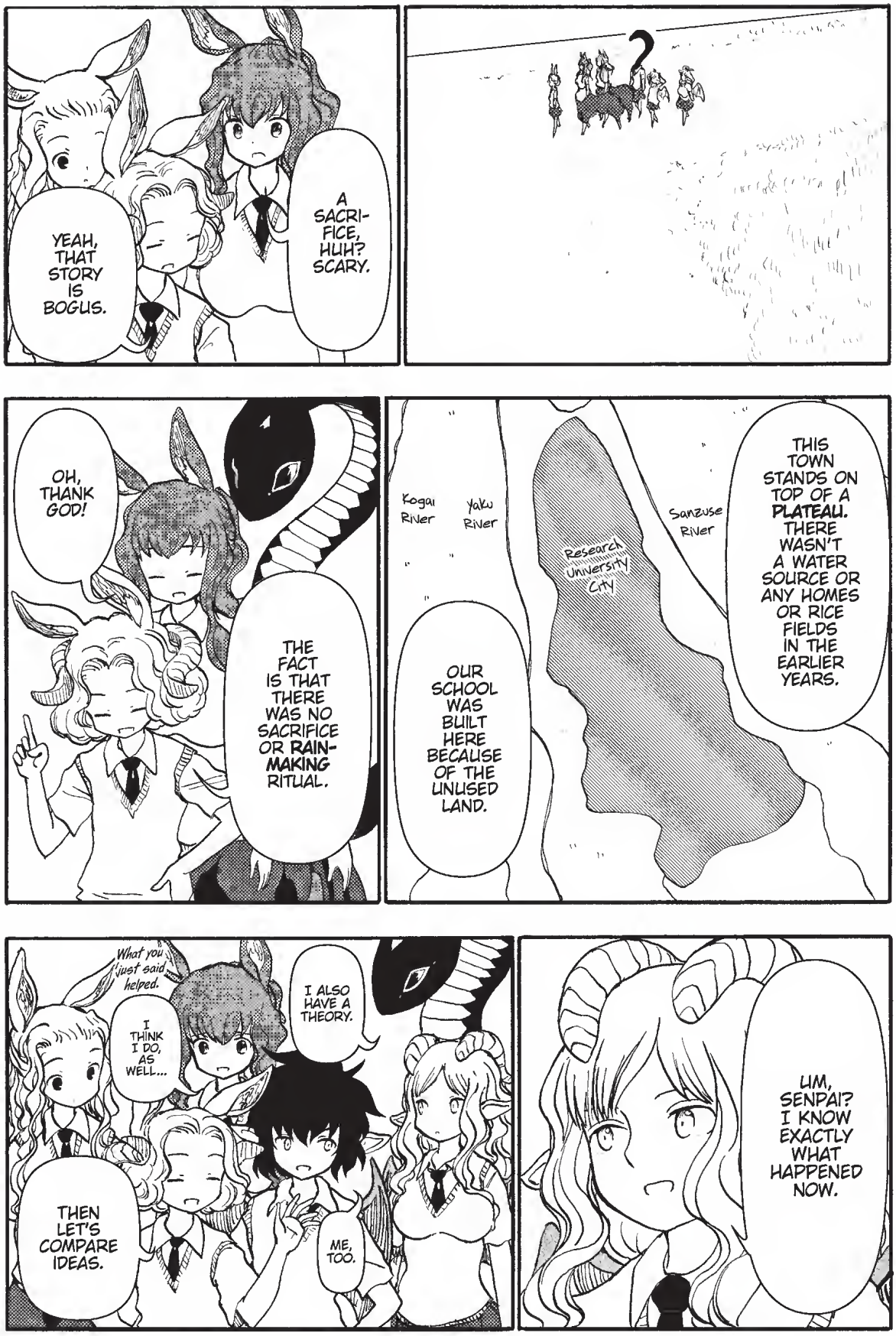
COME ON IN.

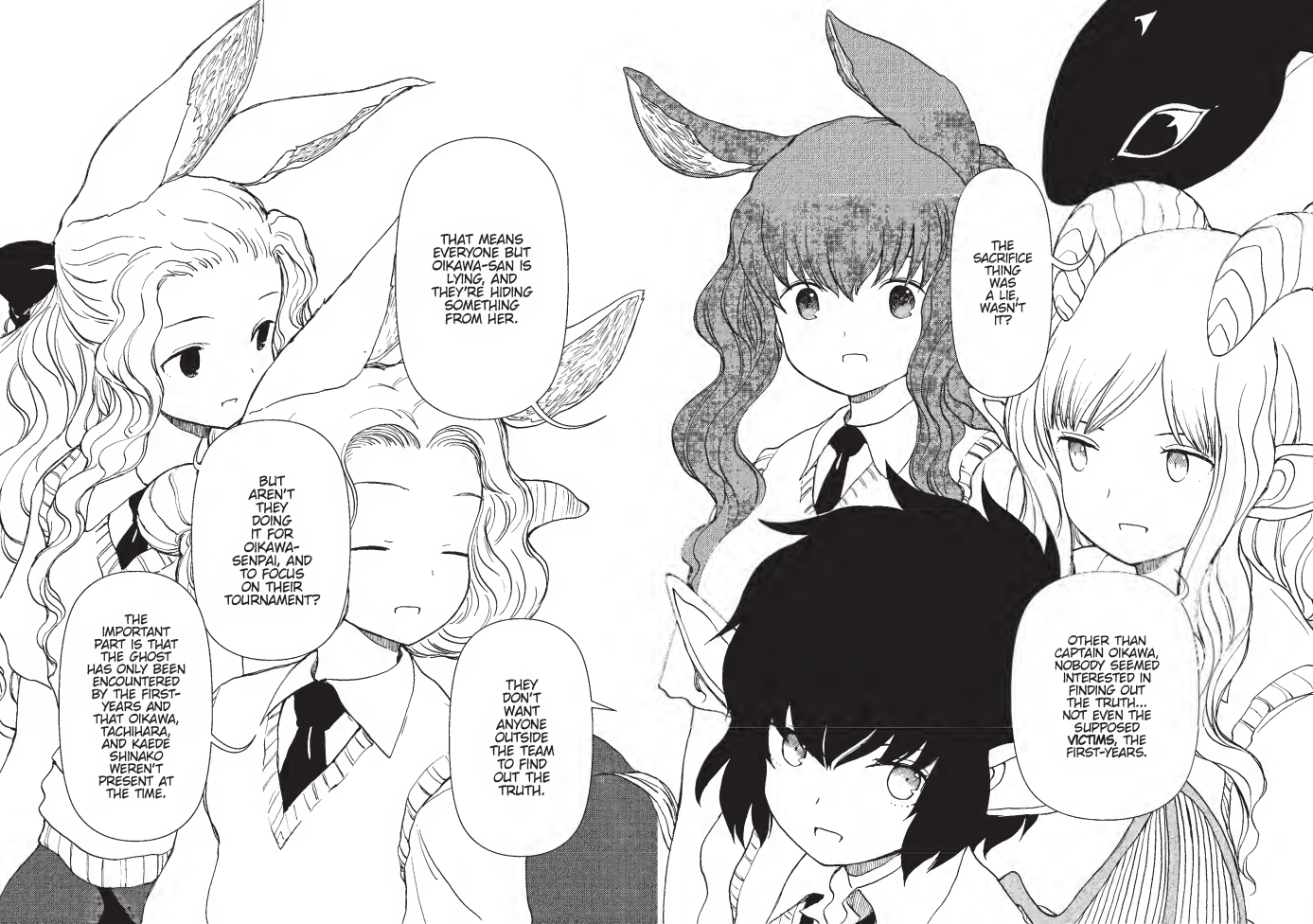

STUMBLE
AH!

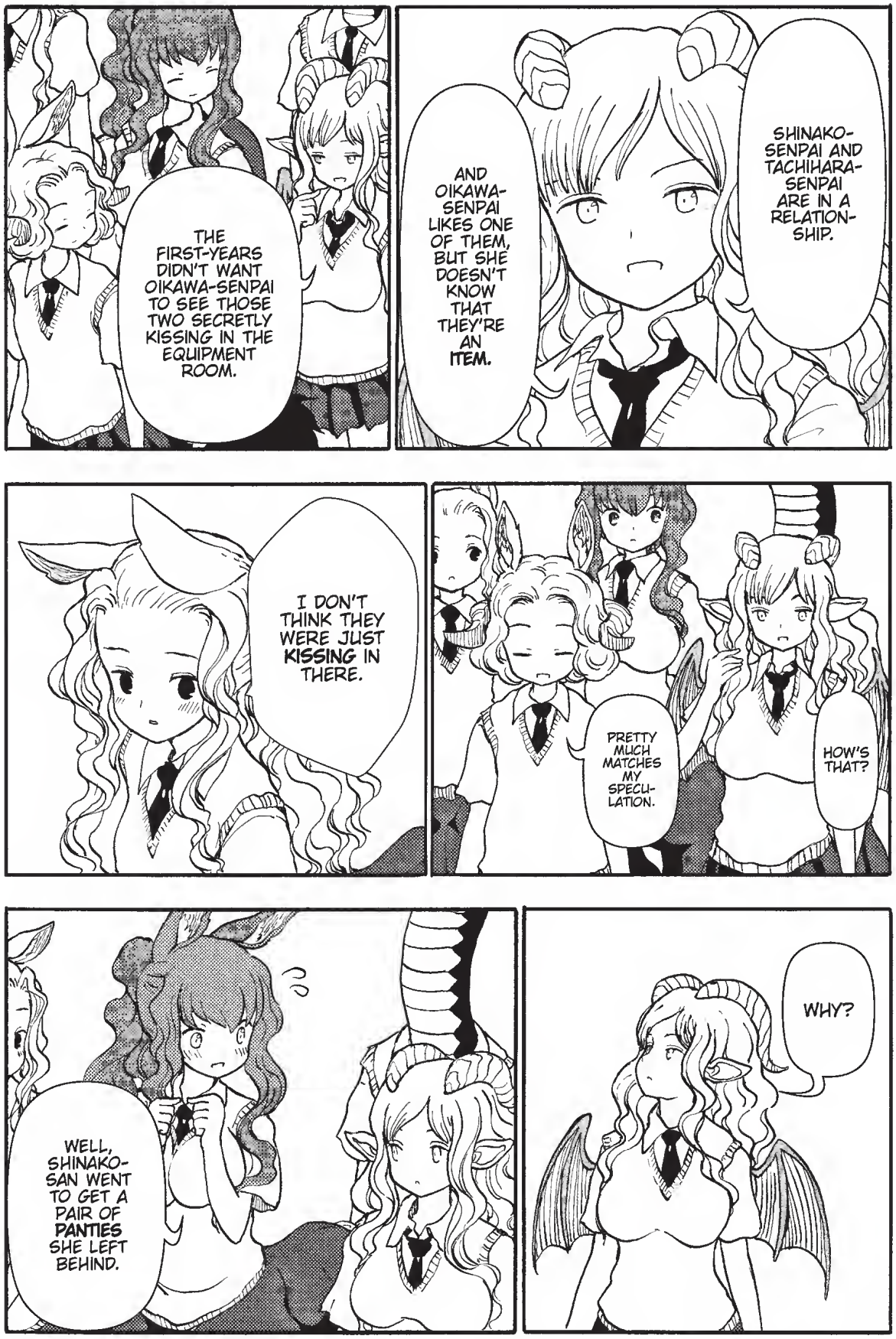

I'M FINE, SORRY.
YOU OKAY?

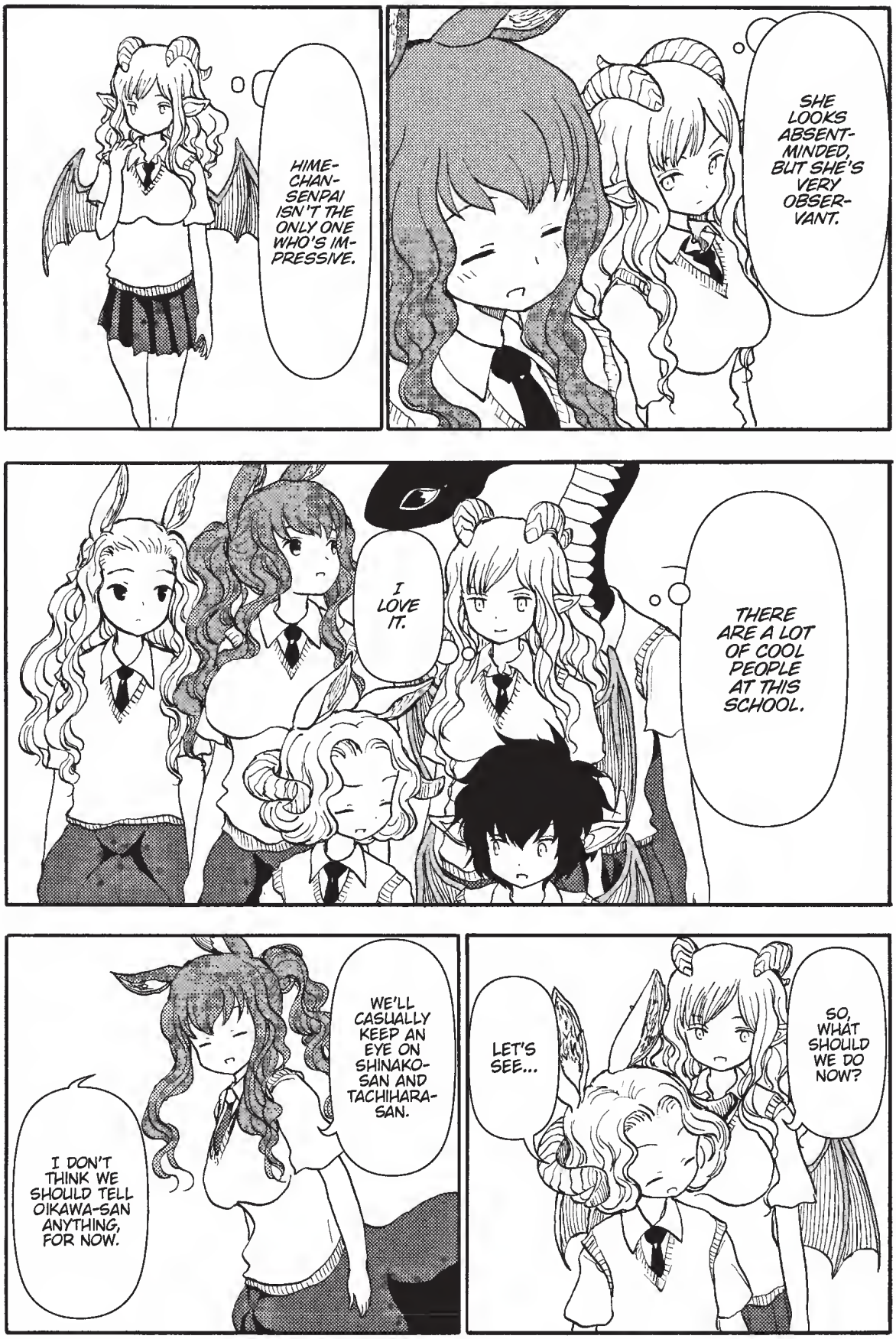
DID YOU SENSE SOME-THING?
NO, WE DON'T HAVE EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION.
SORRY TO SAY THIS, BUT IT'S DARK AND SPOOKY.
IT'S PRETTY SPACIOUS.
TELL US EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED.
ONE DAY, WE HEARD A STRANGE NOISE FROM THIS ROOM.
AND WHEN A FIRST-YEAR WENT IN THERE FOR SOMETHING, SHE SAW A GHOST WITH A SNAKE WRAPPED AROUND ITS BODY.

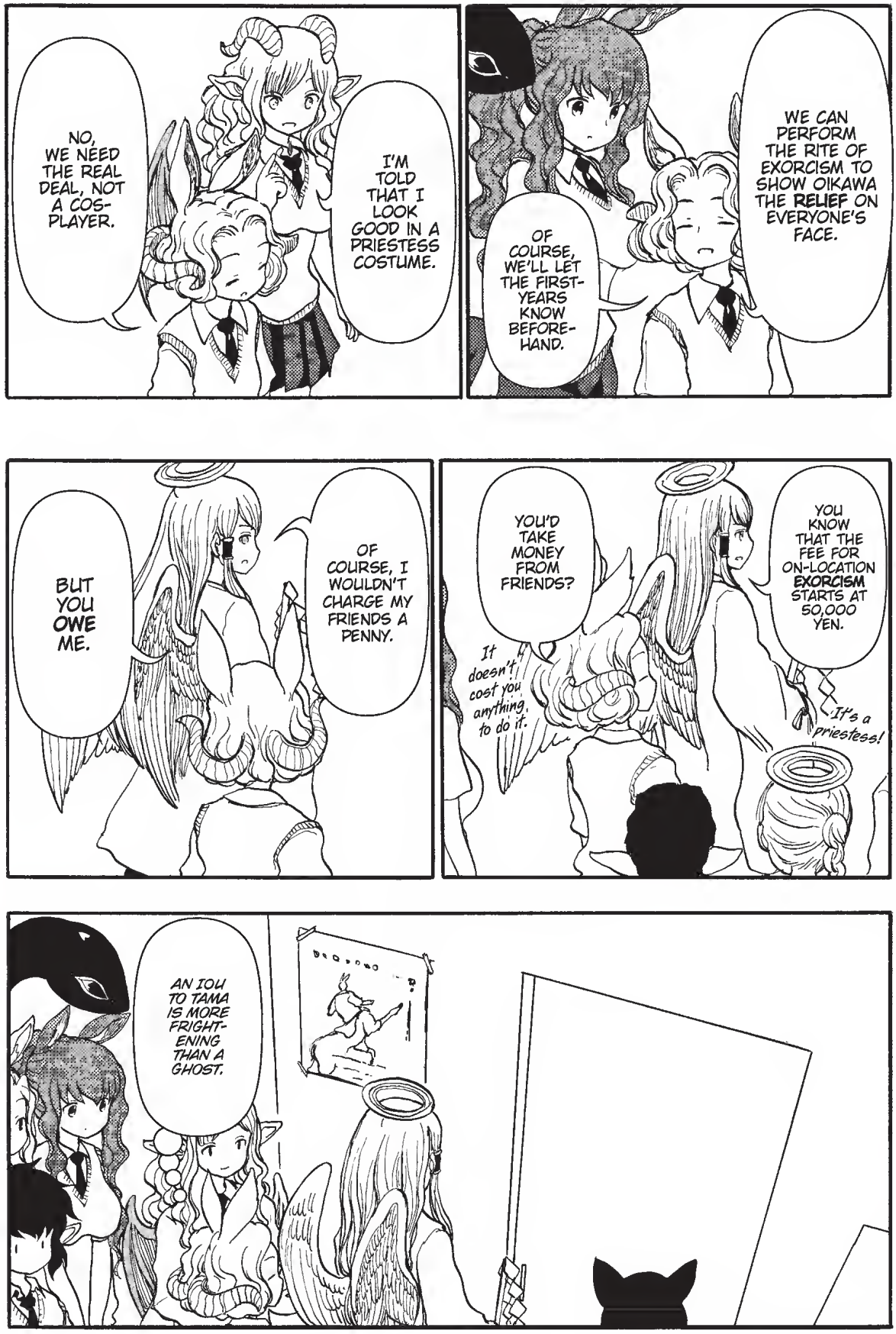

SOMEONE FAMILIAR WITH THIS PLACE TOLD ME THAT IT WAS ONCE A RESERVOIR, BUT IT DRIED UP IN A DROUGHT.
AN APPARITION OF A GIRL WHO WAS SACRIFICED TO A PRIMITIVE SERPENT GOD'S RAIN RITUAL APPEARS.
THERE'S BEEN FREQUENT SIGHTINGS OF THE GHOST SINCE.
I saw it again!
Again?
This is bad.
IT COULD JUST BE AN ILLUSION OR SOMETHING.
BUT WE HAVE A TOURNAMENT COMING UP THAT WE NEED TO FOCUS ON.
SENPAI, WE'LL BE OKAY!
THERE'S NO TIME TO BE AFRAID OF GHOSTS!
HUH? BUT YOU'VE MADE SUCH A BIG FUSS.
THEY MAY NOT LOOK IT, BUT THEY KNOW A LOT ABOUT THIS.
IT WOULD BE A GODSEND IF THEY CAN HELP.
I THINK WE CAN DO IT.
WE NEED TO GET OUR STUFF READY, SO WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
THANKS.


A SACRIFICE, HUH? SCARY.
YEAH, THAT STORY IS BOGUS.
?
OH, THANK GOD!
THE FACT IS THAT THERE WAS NO SACRIFICE OR RAIN-MAKING RITUAL.
Kogai River
Yaku River
Research University City
Sanzuse River
THIS TOWN STANDS ON TOP OF A PLATEAU. THERE WASN'T A WATER SOURCE OR ANY HOMES OR RICE FIELDS IN THE EARLIER YEARS.
OUR SCHOOL WAS BUILT HERE BECAUSE OF THE UNUSED LAND.
What you just said helped.
I THINK I DO, AS WELL...
I ALSO HAVE A THEORY.
THEN LET'S COMPARE IDEAS.
ME, TOO.
UM, SENPAI? I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED NOW.


THE SACRIFICE THING WAS A LIE, WASN'T IT?
OTHER THAN CAPTAIN OIKAWA, NOBODY SEEMED INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT THE TRUTH... NOT EVEN THE SUPPOSED VICTIMS, THE FIRST-YEARS.
THAT MEANS EVERYONE BUT OIKAWA-SAN IS LYING, AND THEY'RE HIDING SOMETHING FROM HER.
BUT AREN'T THEY DOING IT FOR OIKAWA-SENPAI, AND TO FOCUS ON THEIR TOURNAMENT?
THEY DON'T WANT ANYONE OUTSIDE THE TEAM TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH.
THE IMPORTANT PART IS THAT THE GHOST HAS ONLY BEEN ENCOUNTERED BY THE FIRST-YEARS AND THAT OIKAWA, TACHIHARA, AND KAEDE SHINAKO WEREN'T PRESENT AT THE TIME.


SHINAKO-SENPAI AND TACHIHARA-SENPAI ARE IN A RELATION-SHIP.
AND OIKAWA-SENPAI LIKES ONE OF THEM, BUT SHE DOESN'T KNOW THAT THEY'RE AN ITEM.
THE FIRST-YEARS DIDN'T WANT OIKAWA-SENPAI TO SEE THOSE TWO SECRETLY KISSING IN THE EQUIPMENT ROOM.
I DON'T THINK THEY WERE JUST KISSING IN THERE.
HOW'S THAT?
PRETTY MUCH MATCHES MY SPECU-LATION.
WHY?
WELL, SHINAKO-SAN WENT TO GET A PAIR OF PANTIES SHE LEFT BEHIND.


HIME-CHAN-SENPAI ISN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO'S IM-PRESSIVE.
SHE LOOKS ABSENT-MINDED, BUT SHE'S VERY OBSER-VANT.
I LOVE IT.
THERE ARE A LOT OF COOL PEOPLE AT THIS SCHOOL.
WE'LL CASUALLY KEEP AN EYE ON SHINAKO-SAN AND TACHIHARA-SAN.
I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD TELL OIKAWA-SAN ANYTHING, FOR NOW.
LET'S SEE...
SO, WHAT SHOULD WE DO NOW?


I'M TOLD THAT I LOOK GOOD IN A PRIESTESS COSTUME.
NO, WE NEED THE REAL DEAL, NOT A COS-PLAYER.
WE CAN PERFORM THE RITE OF EXORCISM TO SHOW OIKAWA THE **RELIEF** ON EVERYONE'S FACE.
OF COURSE, WE'LL LET THE FIRST-YEARS KNOW BEFORE-HAND.
OF COURSE, I WOULDN'T CHARGE MY FRIENDS A PENNY.
BUT YOU **OWE** ME.
YOU KNOW THAT THE FEE FOR ON-LOCATION **EXORCISM** STARTS AT 50,000 YEN.
YOU'D TAKE MONEY FROM FRIENDS?
It doesn't cost you anything to do it.
It's a priestess!
AN IOU TO TAMA IS MORE FRIGHT-ENING THAN A GHOST.

A CentaUr's Life

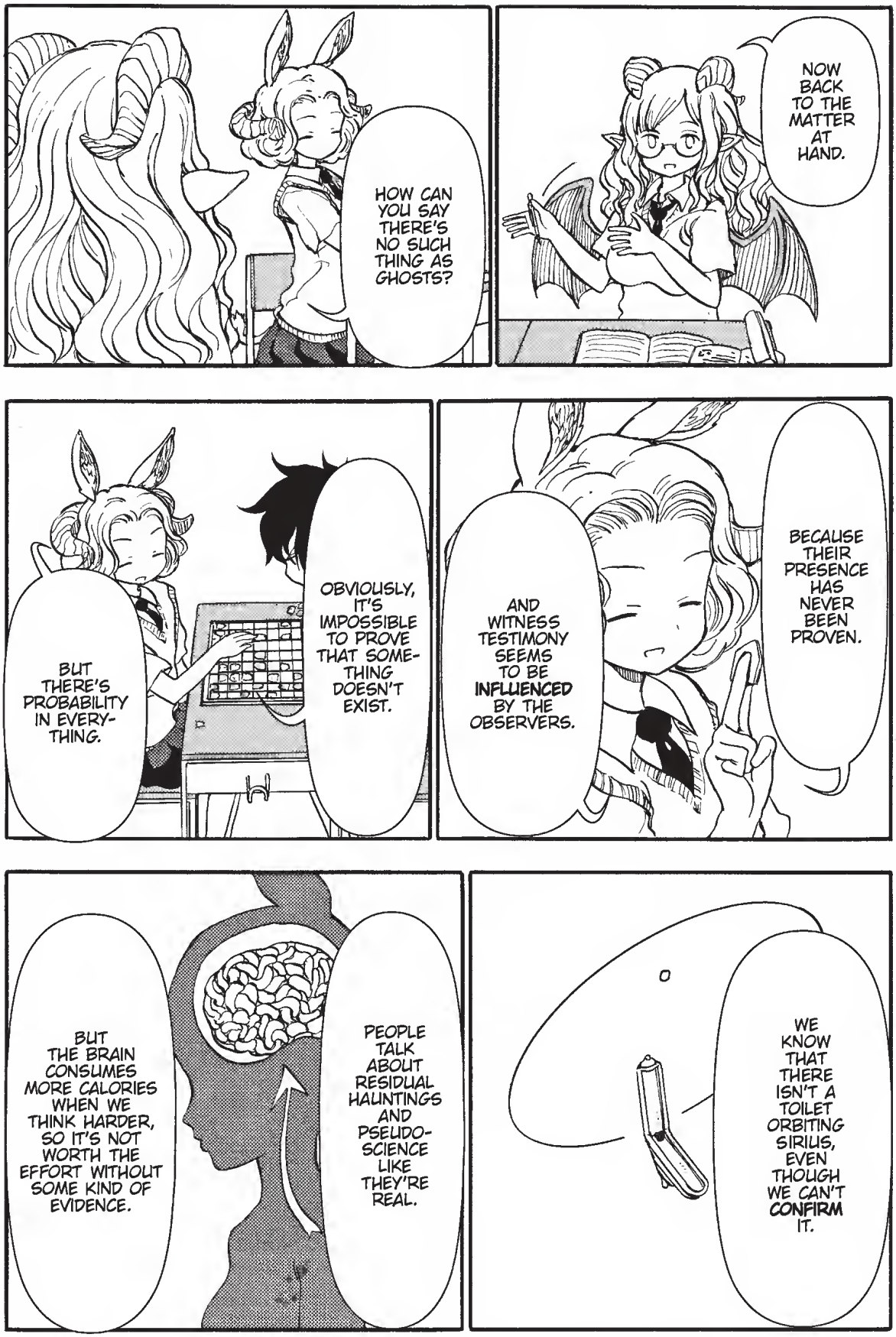
UNDERSTANDING AMPHIBIANFOLK PART 5: AMPHIBIANFOLK HISTORY

BECAUSE OF THEIR LIFESTYLE, THE HISTORY OF THE AMPHIBIANFOLK IS FULL OF MYSTERY. THEY LACK A WRITTEN LANGUAGE, THOUGH THEY MAY HAVE USED A FORM OF PICTOGRAPHY AS A CODE WITHIN TRIBES OR FAMILIES, AND THEIR RELIANCE ON PLANT-BASED MATERIAL RESOURCES MEANT THAT MOST STRUCTURES, TOOLS, AND ARTIFACTS WERE LOST TO DECOMPOSITION IN THEIR JUNGLE HOME. ONE CIVILIZATION, TAWANTINSUYU, SEEMS TO HAVE HAD CONTACT WITH AMPHIBIANFOLK FOR CENTURIES, BUT BECAUSE THEY WERE A PRE-LITERATE CIVILIZATION UNTIL THE MODERN AGE, THEY WERE UNABLE TO CONTRIBUTE MUCH INFORMATION. THEIR RECORDKEEPING WAS ALL DONE WITH A SYSTEM OF KNOTTED STRINGS CALLED QUIPU, AND THEIR ARTWORK HAD ONLY A HANDFUL OF DEPICTIONS OF AMPHIBIANFOLK. THE MOST NOTEWORTHY DISCOVERY IS THAT OF STONE SCULPTURES RESEMBLING AMPHIBIANFOLK WEARING MAMMALIAN MASKS, KNEELING AND HOLDING MAN-CATCHERS WITH TWO PAIRS OF CROSSED ARMS.

THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT AMPHIBIANFOLK DID INDEED HAVE THEIR OWN CIVILIZATION. IN THE GUALO GUABO RUINS IN THE FORMER RIVER A BASIN, RESEARCHERS DISCOVERED WHAT APPEARS TO BE A MEGALITHIC TEMPLE BUILT OF LARGE STONE SLABS AND A STONE STATUE OF A SNAKE-HEADED DEITY. THE STRUCTURE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN BUILT ABOUT 5,000 YEARS AGO, AND STONE TOOLS OF EQUIVALENT AGE THAT WERE FOUND IN THE AREA WERE POSSIBLY USED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE. THE STRUCTURE ITSELF LACKED THE REFINEMENT OF THOSE BUILT BY TAWANTINSUYU; THE TOOLS DISCOVERED WERE MORE SUITED TO AMPHIBIANFOLK HANDS THAN THOSE OF MAMMALIANS; THE SYMBOLS ENGRAVED IN THE GOD STATUE WERE SIMILAR TO THOSE FORMERLY USED BY THE CTLOLOCTOL AMPHIBIANFOLK TRIBE; THESE STRONG PIECES OF EVIDENCE SUGGEST THAT THESE RUINS WERE LIKELY BUILT BY AMPHIBIANFOLK. WHETHER THIS CIVILIZATION WAS ABANDONED OR SIMPLY MOVED ELSEWHERE REMAINS AN UNSOLVED RIDDLE.

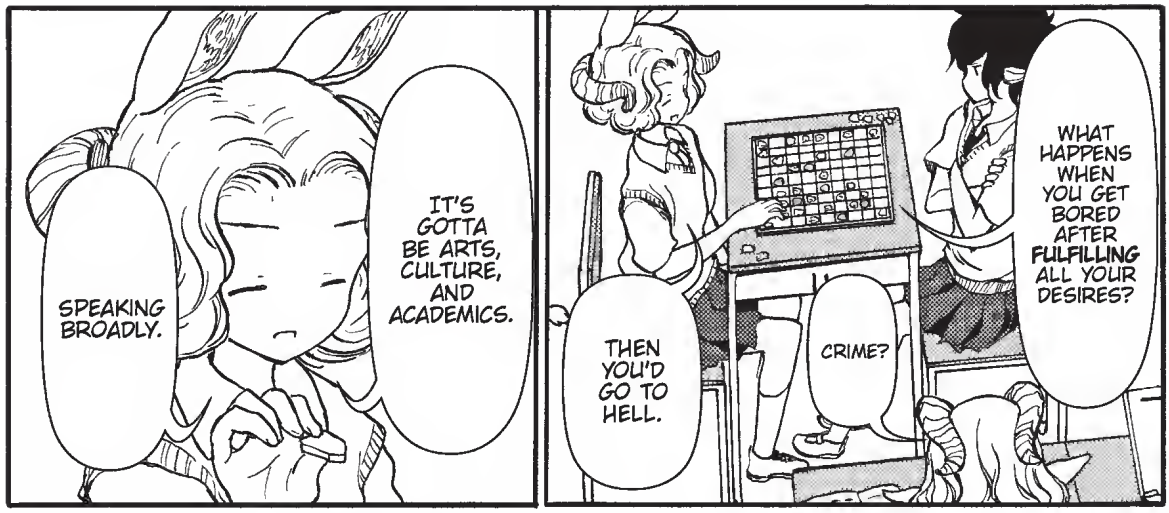
CHAPTER 84
YEAH, WHAT'S UP?
BY THE WAY, SEN-PAI...
SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE
CLICK CLICK

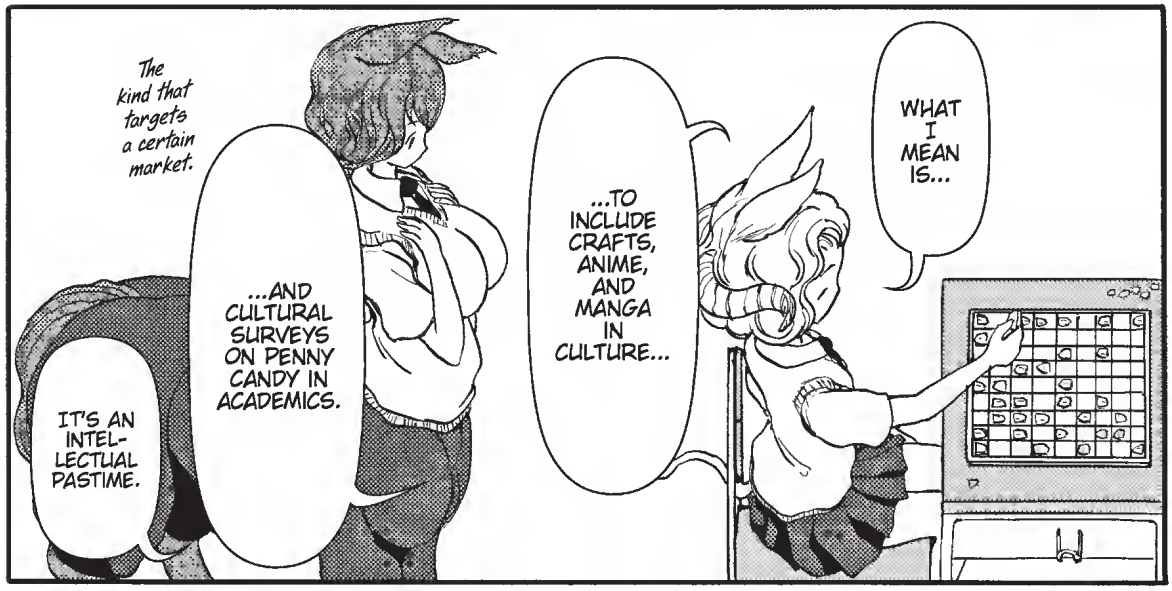
MY HOME-WORK.
YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN GHOSTS EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE IN THE OCCULT CLUB, RIGHT?
RIGHT, NO SUCH THING.
WAIT, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
BUT I HAVE TO WORK HARD, OR I'LL LOSE MY POSITION AS A CLASS REP.
AND I DON'T WANT TO STUDY AT HOME.
THAT'S A SUR-PRISE.
I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO BE DILIGENT AND METHODICAL.
REALLY?
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WORE GLASSES.
OH, THEY'RE FAKE.
AREN'T THEY PRETTY?
Um, right.

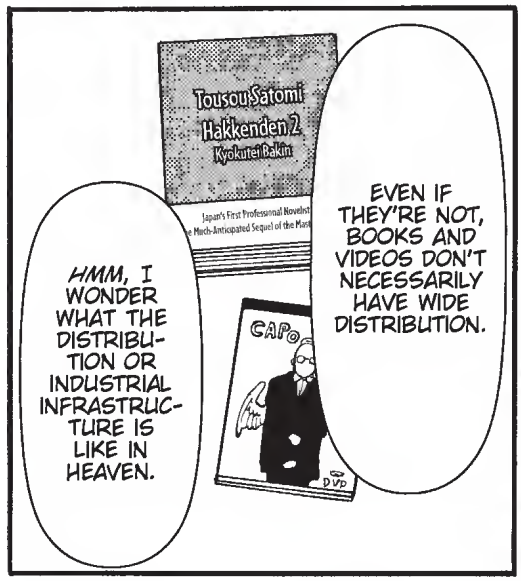

HOW CAN YOU SAY THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS GHOSTS?
NOW BACK TO THE MATTER AT HAND.
BUT THERE'S PROBABILITY IN EVERY-THING.
OBVIOUSLY, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO PROVE THAT SOME-THING DOESN'T EXIST.
AND WITNESS TESTIMONY SEEMS TO BE INFLUENCED BY THE OBSERVERS.
BECAUSE THEIR PRESENCE HAS NEVER BEEN PROVEN.
BUT THE BRAIN CONSUMES MORE CALORIES WHEN WE THINK HARDER, SO IT'S NOT WORTH THE EFFORT WITHOUT SOME KIND OF EVIDENCE.
PEOPLE TALK ABOUT RESIDUAL HAUNTINGS AND PSEUDO-SCIENCE LIKE THEY'RE REAL.
WE KNOW THAT THERE ISN'T A TOILET ORBITING SIRIUS, EVEN THOUGH WE CAN'T CONFIRM IT.

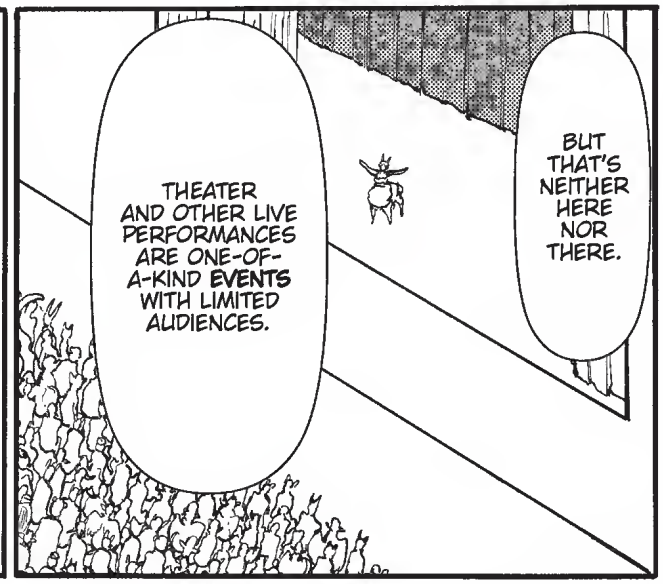
THAT'S PROBABLY WHY PEOPLE CAME UP WITH GHOSTS AND THE AFTERLIFE.
IT'S FRIGHTENING TO THINK THAT WE CAN DISAPPEAR WHEN WE DIE.
STILL... EMOTION, PERSONALITY, AND THOUGHT ARE JUST SIGNALS TRAVELING THROUGH NEURONS.
IF THERE'S NO HEAVEN, MAYBE PEOPLE WILL STOP BELIEVING IN THIS STUFF.
WELL, THEN LET'S PROVE THAT HEAVEN DOESN'T EXIST, EITHER.
Request to Establish Kyudo Club

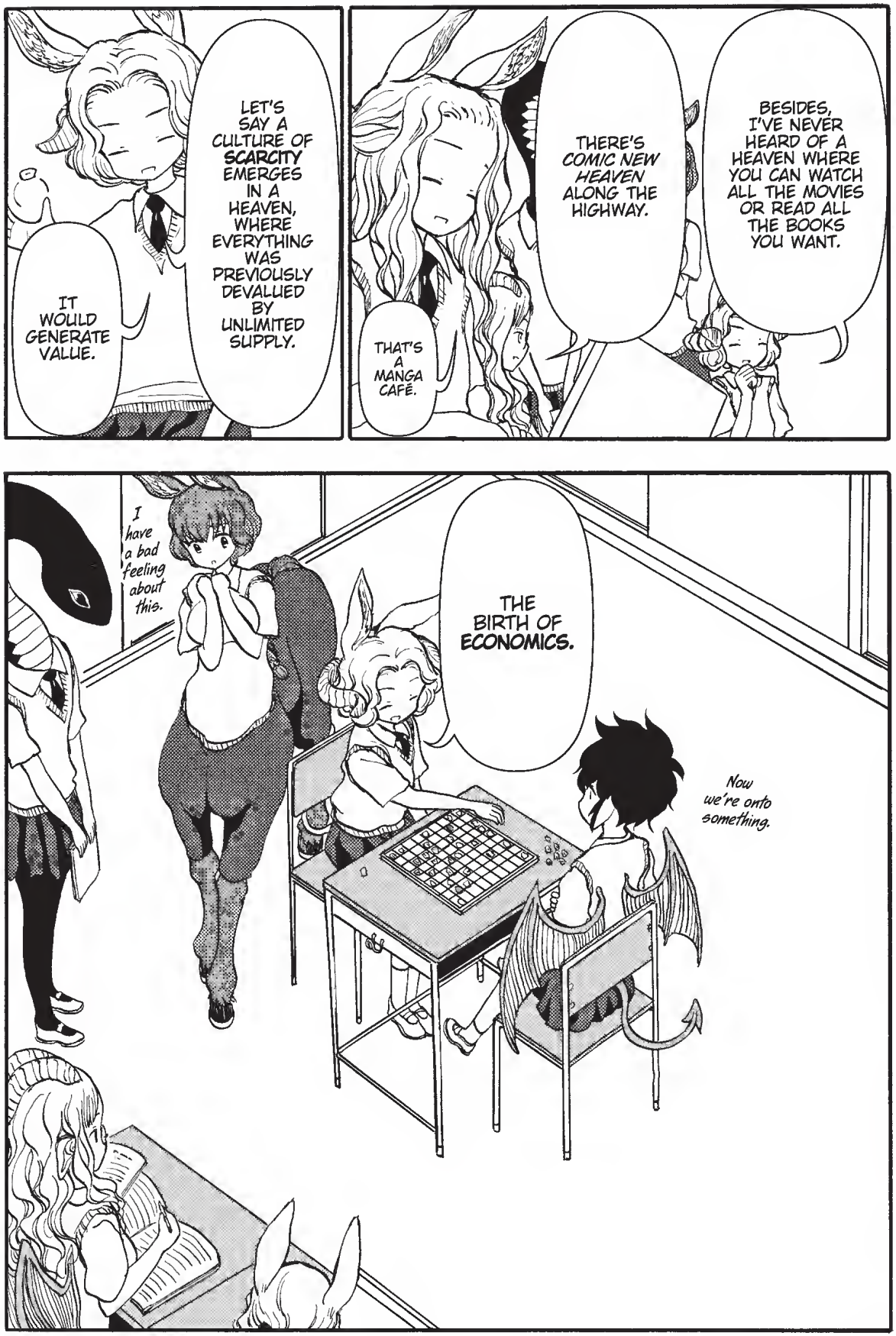
IN THE BIBLE AND BUDDHIST TEXTS, HEAVEN IS PAINTED AS THE LAND OF ABUNDANCE.
LET'S SAY IT DID.
Land flows with milk, honey, and wine.
Poles of meat everywhere.
Trees produce fruit continuously.
IT DOESN'T EXIST?
NO, IT DOESN'T.
IF IT GOES ON FOREVER, IT'S A LIVING HELL.
BUT YOU'D EVENTUALLY GET BORED WITH EATING, MAKING OUT, AND ENJOYING THE SHADE.
Forget about food. I want to read a book.
SOUNDS LIKE HELL TO ME.
I HEARD THERE'S A TYPE OF HEAVEN WITH ENDLESS WAR.

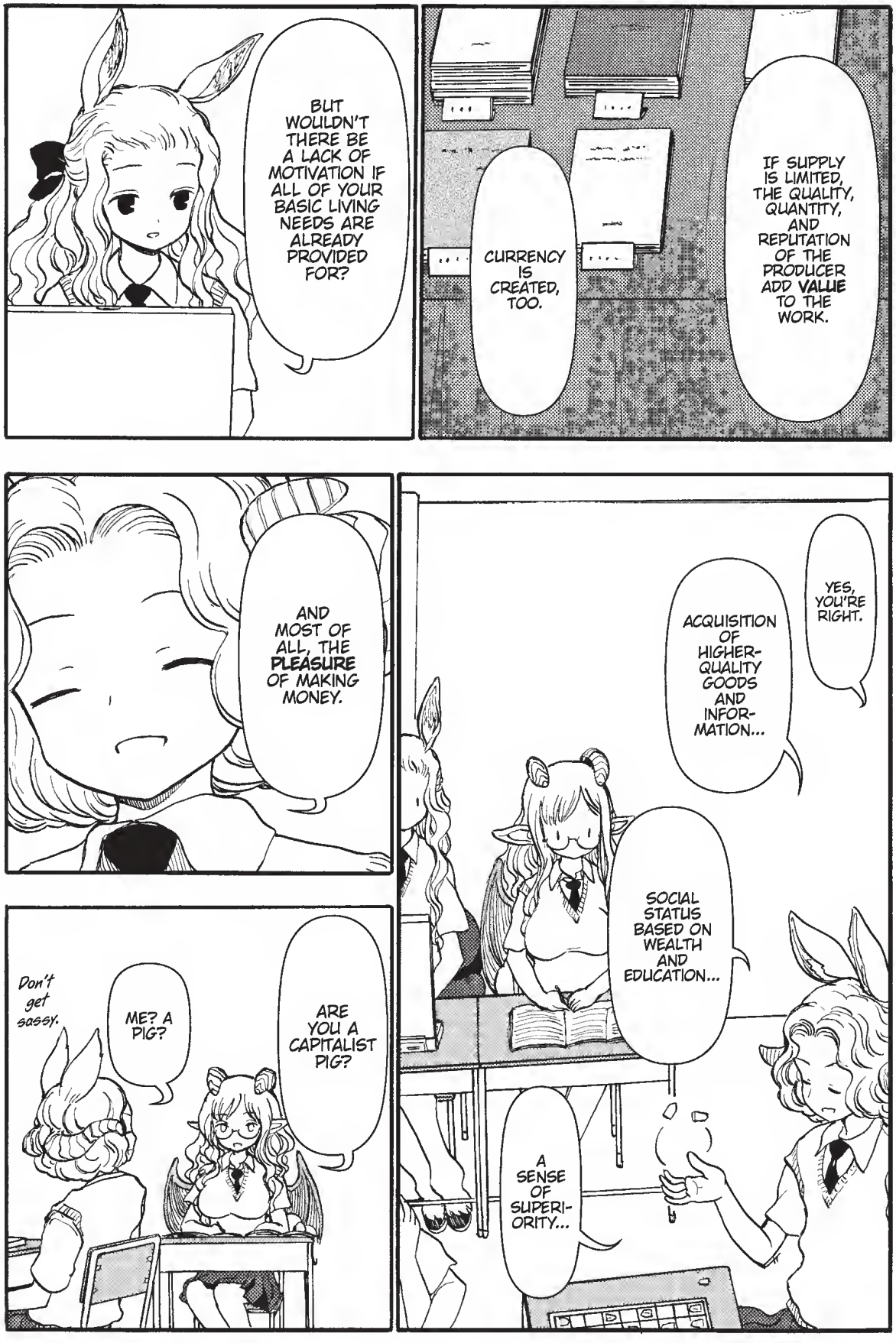

SPEAKING BROADLY.
IT'S GOTTA BE ARTS, CULTURE, AND ACADEMICS.
THEN YOU'D GO TO HELL.
CRIME?
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU GET BORED AFTER FULFILLING ALL YOUR DESIRES?

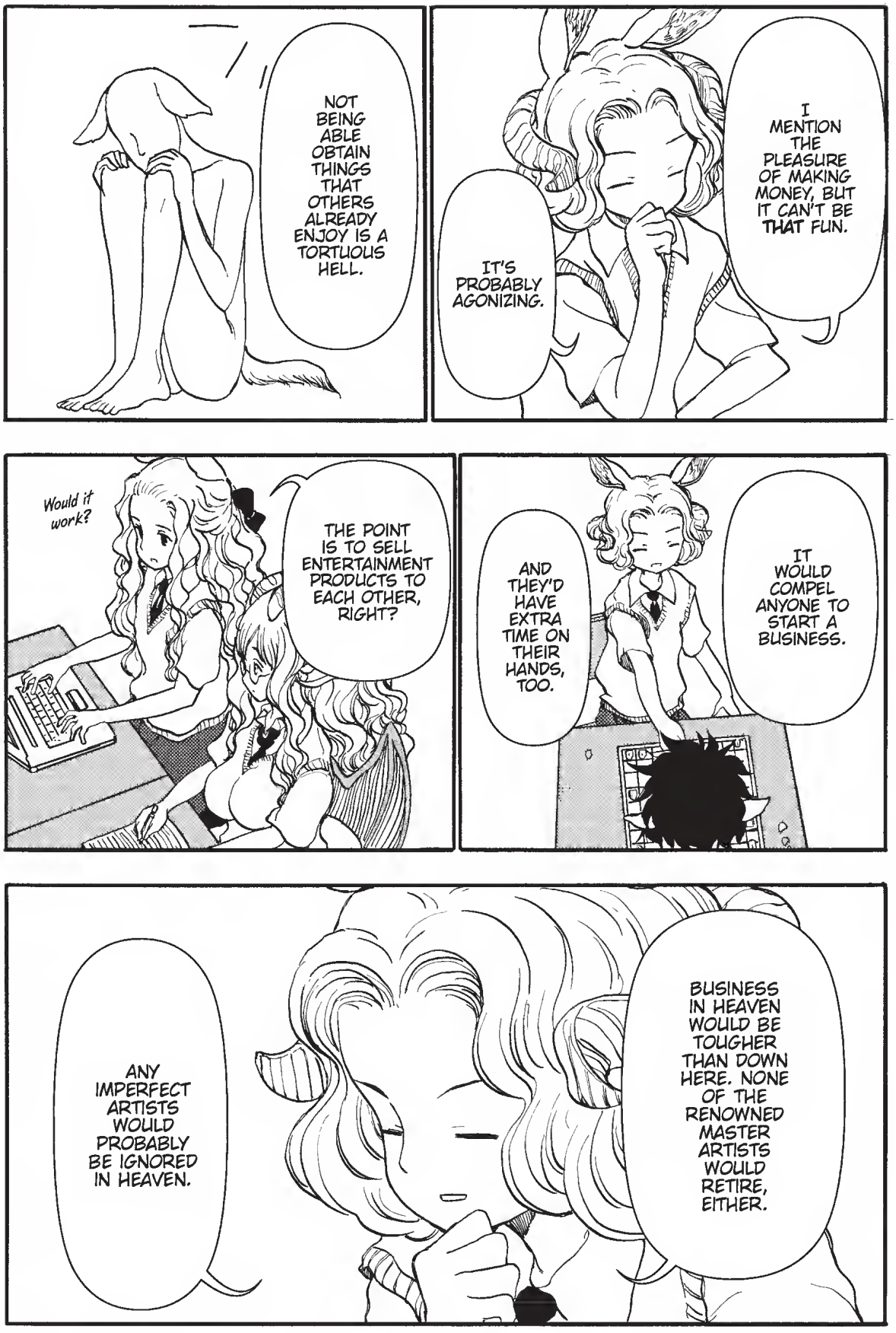

IT'S AN INTEL-LECTUAL PASTIME.
The kind that targets a certain market.
...AND CULTURAL SURVEYS ON PENNY CANDY IN ACADEMICS.
...TO INCLUDE CRAFTS, ANIME, AND MANGA IN CULTURE...
WHAT I MEAN IS...


HMM, I WONDER WHAT THE DISTRIBU-TION OR INDUSTRIAL INFRASTRUC-TURE IS LIKE IN HEAVEN.
Tousou Satomi
Hakkenden 2
Kyokutei Bakin
Japan's First Professional Novelist
e Much-Anticipated Sequel of the Man
CAPCOM
DVD
EVEN IF THEY'RE NOT, BOOKS AND VIDEOS DON'T NECESSARILY HAVE WIDE DISTRIBUTION.


THEATER AND OTHER LIVE PERFORMANCES ARE ONE-OF-A-KIND EVENTS WITH LIMITED AUDIENCES.
BUT THAT'S NEITHER HERE NOR THERE.

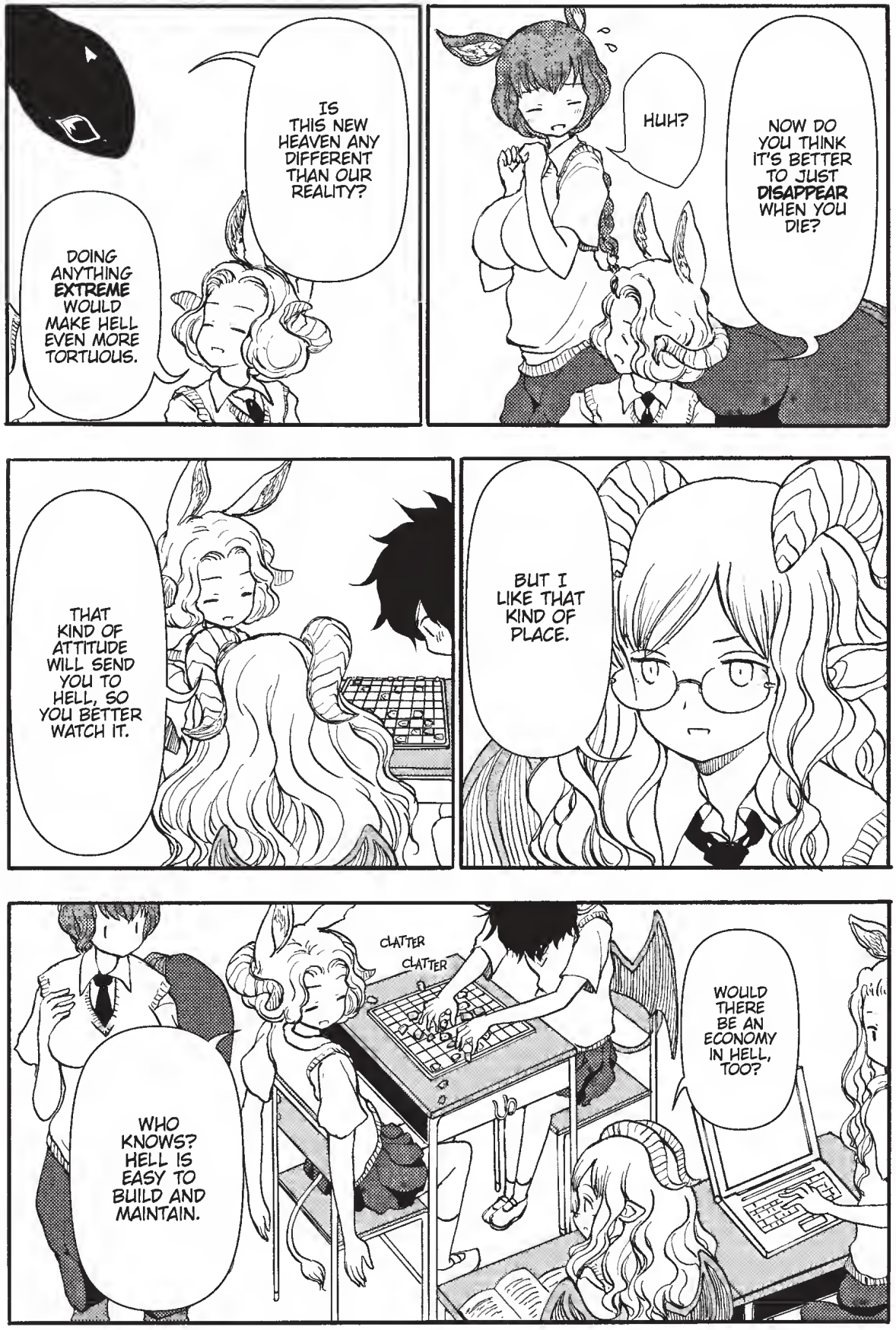

LET'S SAY A CULTURE OF SCARCITY EMERGES IN A HEAVEN, WHERE EVERYTHING WAS PREVIOUSLY DEVALUED BY UNLIMITED SUPPLY.
IT WOULD GENERATE VALUE.
BESIDES, I'VE NEVER HEARD OF A HEAVEN WHERE YOU CAN WATCH ALL THE MOVIES OR READ ALL THE BOOKS YOU WANT.
THERE'S COMIC NEW HEAVEN ALONG THE HIGHWAY.
THAT'S A MANGA CAFÉ.
I have a bad feeling about this.
THE BIRTH OF ECONOMICS.
Now we're onto something.


BUT WOULDN'T THERE BE A LACK OF MOTIVATION IF ALL OF YOUR BASIC LIVING NEEDS ARE ALREADY PROVIDED FOR?
IF SUPPLY IS LIMITED, THE QUALITY, QUANTITY, AND REPUTATION OF THE PRODUCER ADD **VALUE** TO THE WORK.
CURRENCY IS CREATED, TOO.
AND MOST OF ALL, THE **PLEASURE** OF MAKING MONEY.
YES, YOU'RE RIGHT.
ACQUISITION OF HIGHER-QUALITY GOODS AND INFOR-MATION...
SOCIAL STATUS BASED ON WEALTH AND EDUCATION...
A SENSE OF SUPERI-ORITY...
ARE YOU A CAPITALIST PIG?
ME? A PIG?
Don't get sassy.


NOT BEING ABLE OBTAIN THINGS THAT OTHERS ALREADY ENJOY IS A TORTUOUS HELL.
I MENTION THE PLEASURE OF MAKING MONEY, BUT IT CAN'T BE THAT FUN.
IT'S PROBABLY AGONIZING.
Would it work?
THE POINT IS TO SELL ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTS TO EACH OTHER, RIGHT?
IT WOULD COMPEL ANYONE TO START A BUSINESS.
AND THEY'D HAVE EXTRA TIME ON THEIR HANDS, TOO.
BUSINESS IN HEAVEN WOULD BE TOUGHER THAN DOWN HERE. NONE OF THE RENOWNED MASTER ARTISTS WOULD RETIRE, EITHER.
ANY IMPERFECT ARTISTS WOULD PROBABLY BE IGNORED IN HEAVEN.

I HEARD THE MARQUIS DE SADE WAS ACTUALLY A GOOD MAN.
BUT SOME I-NOVELISTS WRITE ABOUT DOMESTIC ABUSE AND OWING BACK RENT PRETTY TRUTH-FULLY.
Train Enthusiast
Hedonist
Collaborator
Domestic Abuser
King of Debt
Gaudi should be safe.
WELL, BEING UNREASONABLY DEMANDING TOWARDS AN EDITOR COULD BE FORGIVEN. UNLESS SOMEONE COMMITS A SERIOUS CRIME LIKE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, THEY COULD PROBABLY AVOID GOING TO HELL.
Being a train enthusiast isn't a crime, but there may not be any trains in heaven.
BUT, SENPAI, WOULDN'T IT BE HARDER FOR MASTERS OF THE ARTS TO GO TO HEAVEN?
Would they even have stuff like paper, pens, or Blu-ray discs?
THE SECONDARY SECTOR WOULD PROBABLY SHRINK PROPOR-TIONALLY, TOO.
Am I really in heaven?
Farming is tough, even in the afterlife.
IF SOMEONE IN A PRIMARY SECTOR OF INDUSTRY DIES, HE'LL LIKELY BE UNEMPLOYED IN HEAVEN.
FOOD SEEMS TO COME IN ABUNDANCE IN HEAVEN.
YOU MEAN, IT'LL BRING COMPETI-TION?
Umph!
Third Sector
Second Sector
First Sector
After Death
First Sector
Before Death
Labor by Industry Sector
BUT THE SECTORS INVOLVED IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF CULTURAL ENTERTAINMENT GOODS WOULD GROW SIGNIFICANTLY.

IT'S GOT TO BE TOUGH FOR SALESPEOPLE IN A WORLD WHERE PEOPLE'S NEEDS ARE ALREADY FULFILLED.
Being too aggressive would get them in trouble, too.
THE EFFECTS OF STRESS MAY GO BEYOND DEPRESSION.
THAT'S NOT GOOD.
WHILE THEY'RE FACED WITH ENDLESS BORE-DOM.
BUT EITHER WAY, THEY'D NOTICE OTHER PEOPLE HAVING FUN.
IT'S HELL, NO MATTER HOW YOU DICE IT.
AND THEFT SENDS YOU STRAIGHT TO HELL. THAT'S AN ETERNAL SWEATSHOP.
THE ONLY ESCAPE WOULD BE TO BUILD A MONASTERY SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY FROM TOWN AND PRACTICE ZEN.


IS THIS NEW HEAVEN ANY DIFFERENT THAN OUR REALITY?
DOING ANYTHING **EXTREME** WOULD MAKE HELL EVEN MORE TORTUOUS.
HUH?
NOW DO YOU THINK IT'S BETTER TO JUST **DISAPPEAR** WHEN YOU DIE?
THAT KIND OF ATTITUDE WILL SEND YOU TO HELL, SO YOU BETTER WATCH IT.
BUT I LIKE THAT KIND OF PLACE.
CLATTER
CLATTER
WHO KNOWS? HELL IS EASY TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN.
WOULD THERE BE AN ECONOMY IN HELL, TOO?

A CentaUr's Life

UNDERSTANDING AMPHIBIANFOLK PART 6: THE EVOLUTION OF AMPHIBIANFOLK

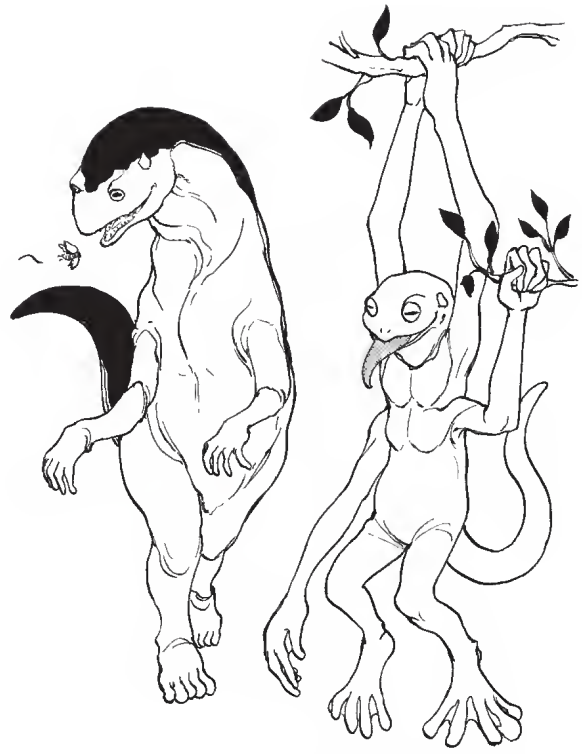
JUST AS MAMMALIANS SLOWLY EVOLVED FROM AMPHIBIANS, AMPHIBIANFOLK WENT THROUGH MANY STAGES PRIOR TO REACHING THEIR PRESENT FORM. UNFORTUNATELY, WE HAVEN'T FOUND MUCH EVIDENCE OF THESE TRANSITIONAL STAGES, PARTIALLY BECAUSE ONE OF THEIR EVOLUTIONARY FORMS IS BELIEVED TO HAVE LIVED IN AREAS OF DEEP JUNGLE THAT ARE STILL UNEXPLORED. DUE TO THE ENVIRONMENT OF THIS LOCATION AND TIME PERIOD, FOSSILIZATION WAS QUITE RARE, AND ONGOING REGIONAL CONFLICTS CREATED DIFFICULTIES FOR SCIENTISTS ATTEMPTING TO INVESTIGATE THE FEW SPECIMENS THAT WERE FOUND. EVENTUALLY, BETWEEN THOSE VERY FEW RECOVERED FOSSILS AND DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE FORM OF THE MODERN SPECIES, SCIENTISTS WERE ABLE TO FILL IN THE GAPS.

DINOSALAMANDERS:

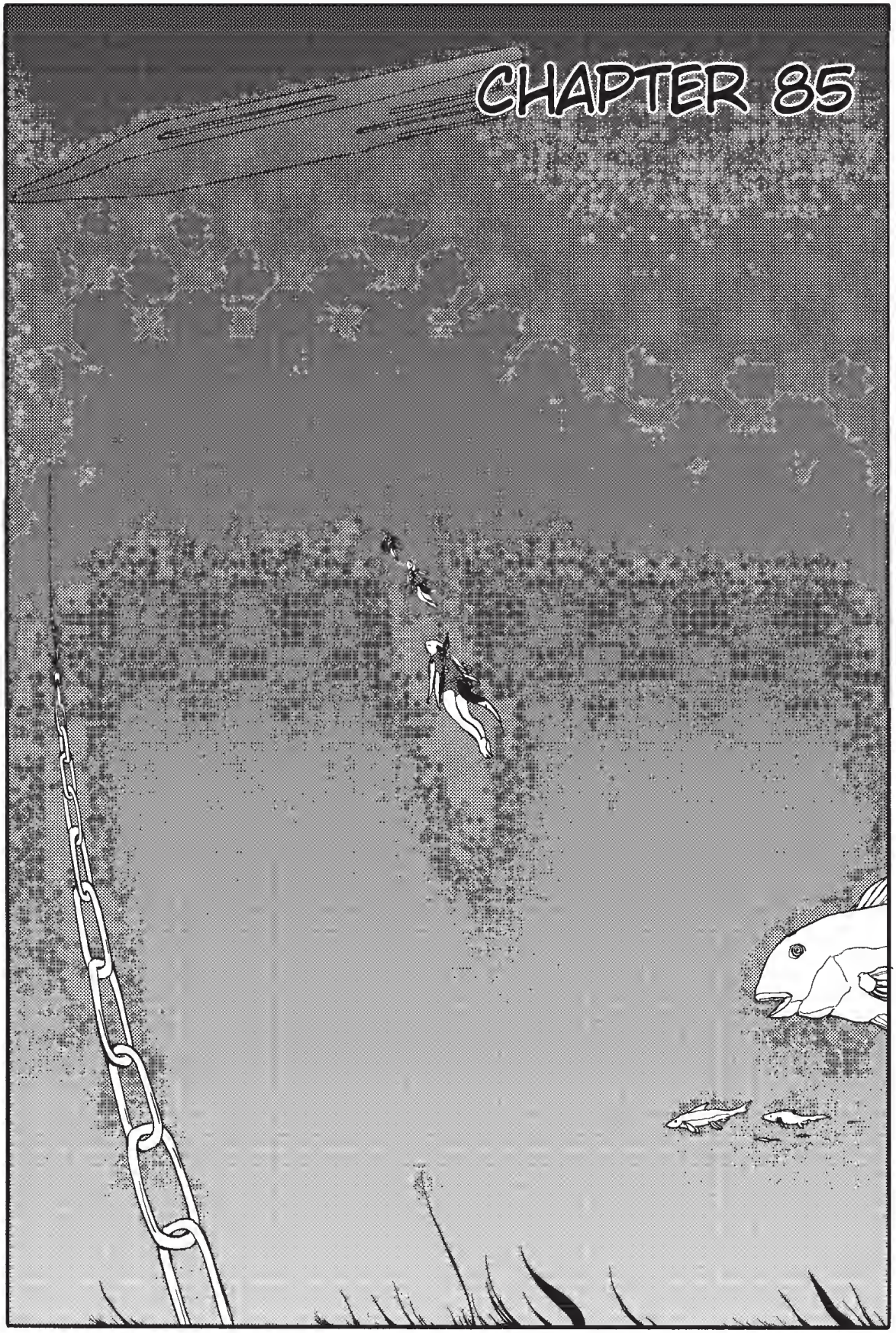
BIPEDAL AMPHIBIANS THAT APPEARED ON GONDWANA IN THE LATE CRETACEOUS PERIOD. THEY WERE INDEED AMPHIBIANS, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THEY HAD THE PHYSIQUE OF A TERRESTRIAL ANIMAL, THE HEIGHT OF A LARGE DOG, AND THE ELONGATED FACE AND ERECT HIND LIMBS OF A DINOSAUR. BECAUSE THEIR OFFSPRING WERE STILL RAISED IN THE WATER, THE SPECIES REMAINED AMPHIBIAN. THEY WENT EXTINCT AT THE END OF THE CRETACEOUS PERIOD.

MONKEY FROGS:

EVOLUTIONARY FORM OF MODERN ARBOREAL AMPHIBIANS STILL LIVING IN THE JUNGLES OF THE RIVER A BASIN. ALTHOUGH THEY'RE CALLED FROGS, THEY HAVE LITTLE IN COMMON WITH THE MODERN FROGS IN ORDER ANURA, INSTEAD RELATING MUCH MORE CLOSELY TO THE PRIMITIVE AMPHIBIANS OF ORDER TEMNOSPONDYLI. THEIR ADHESIVE DISC, WHICH DID LITTLE TO CARRY THEIR 20-40 KG BODY WEIGHT, WAS PRONE TO DEGENERATION DUE TO SPINAL COMPRESSION. THEY USED THEIR OPPOSABLE THUMBS AND FINGERS TO GRASP TWIGS AND VINES. THEY WERE SKILLFUL IN SWIMMING AND CATCHING PREY UNDERWATER, AND THEY LIVED IN TREES WHERE FEWER PREDATORS EXISTED.



DINOSALAMANDER MONKEY FROG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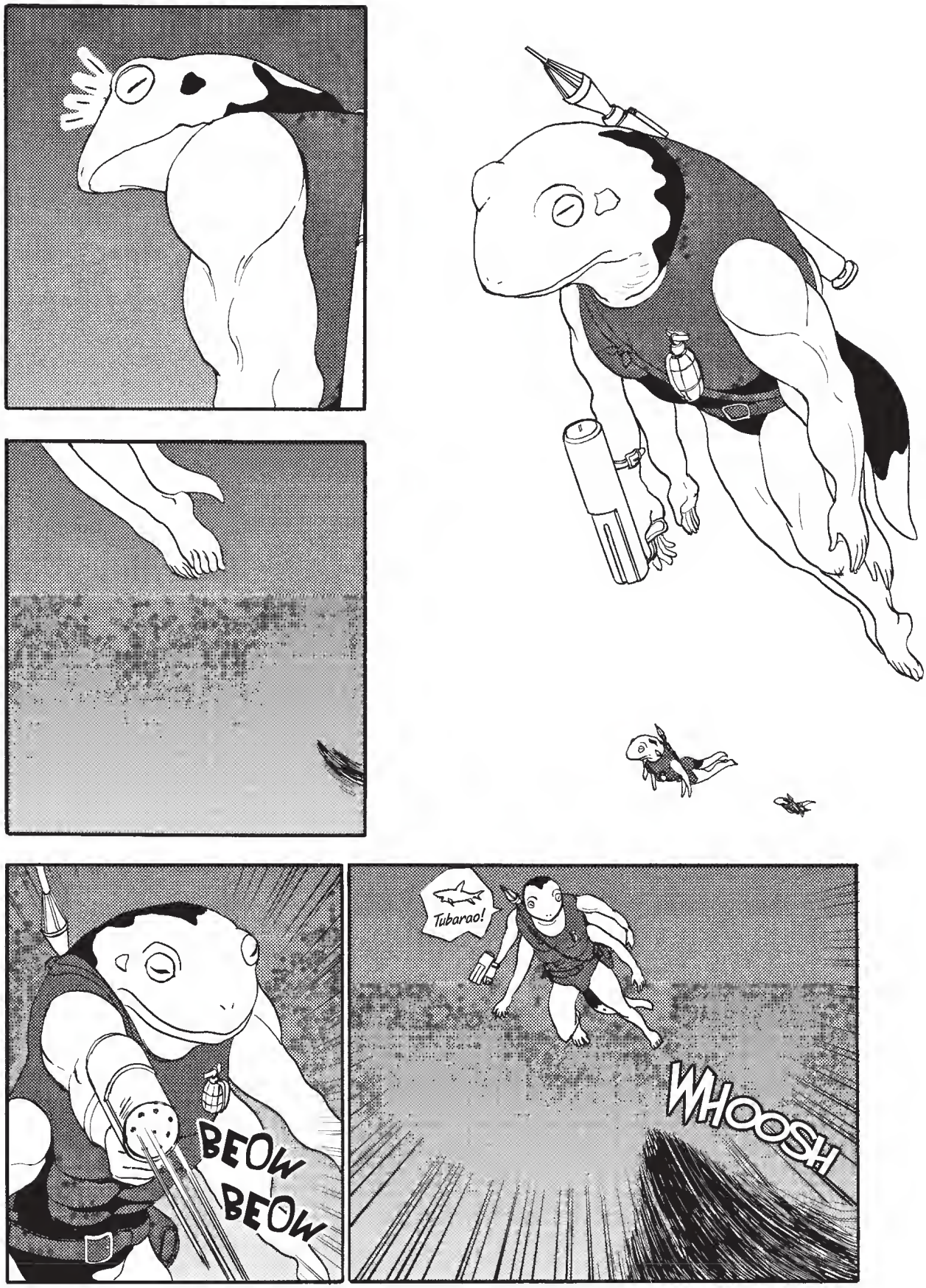
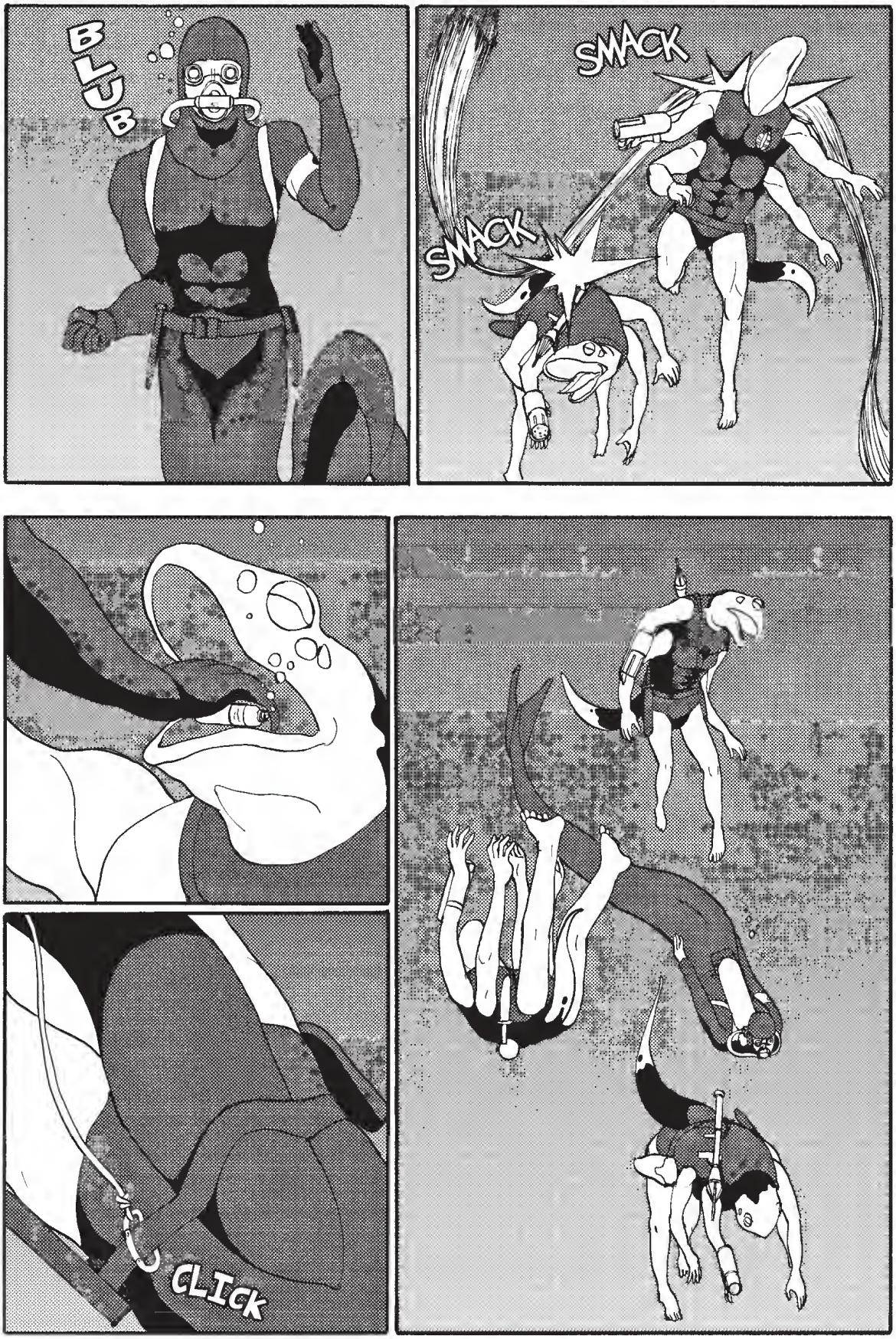
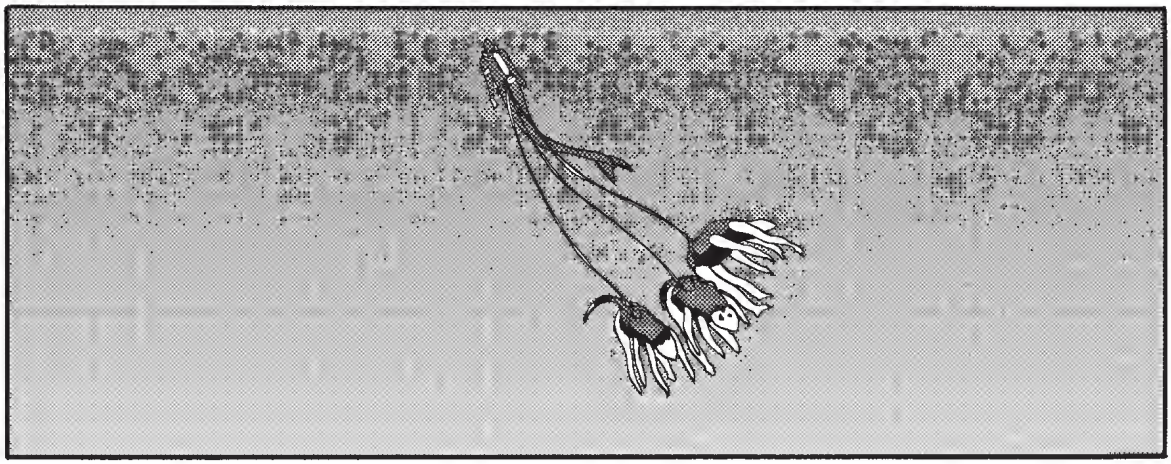
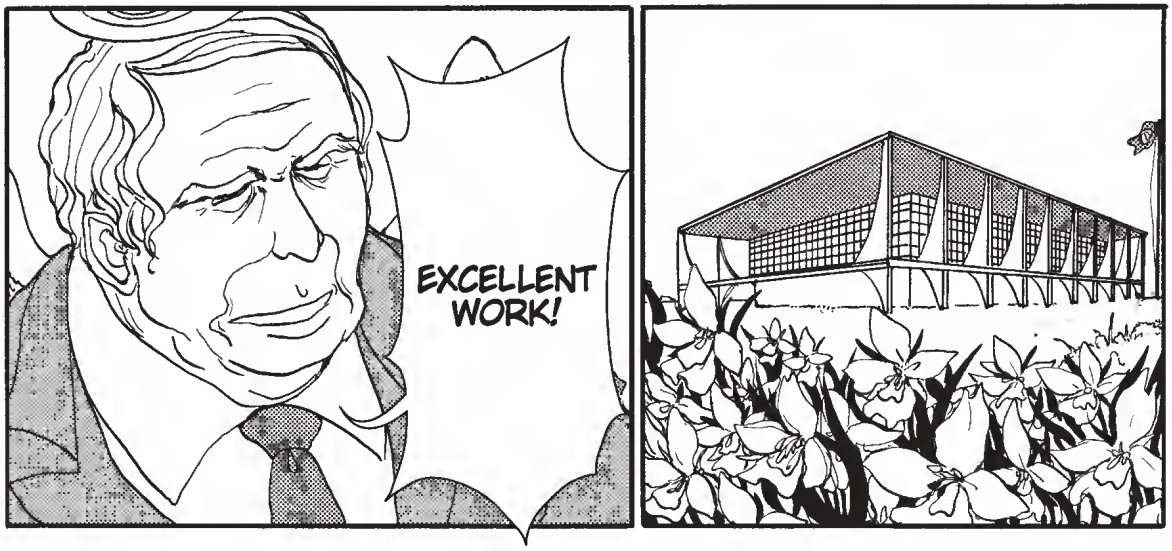
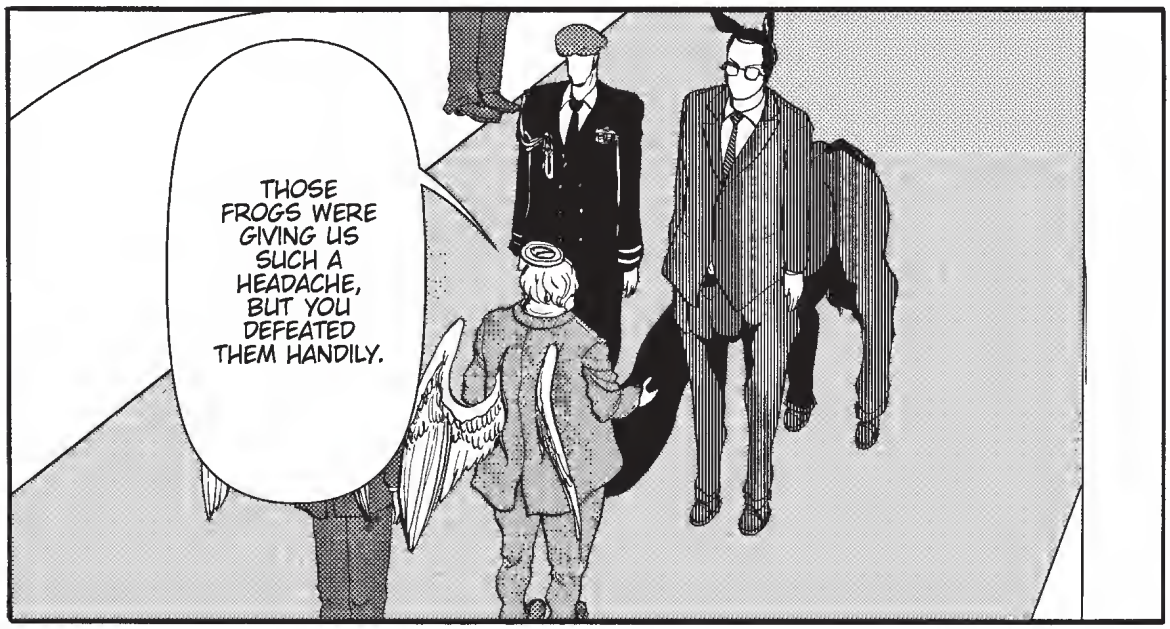

Tubarao!
WHOOSH
BEOW
BEOW

!
SWISH
SMACK
!
!

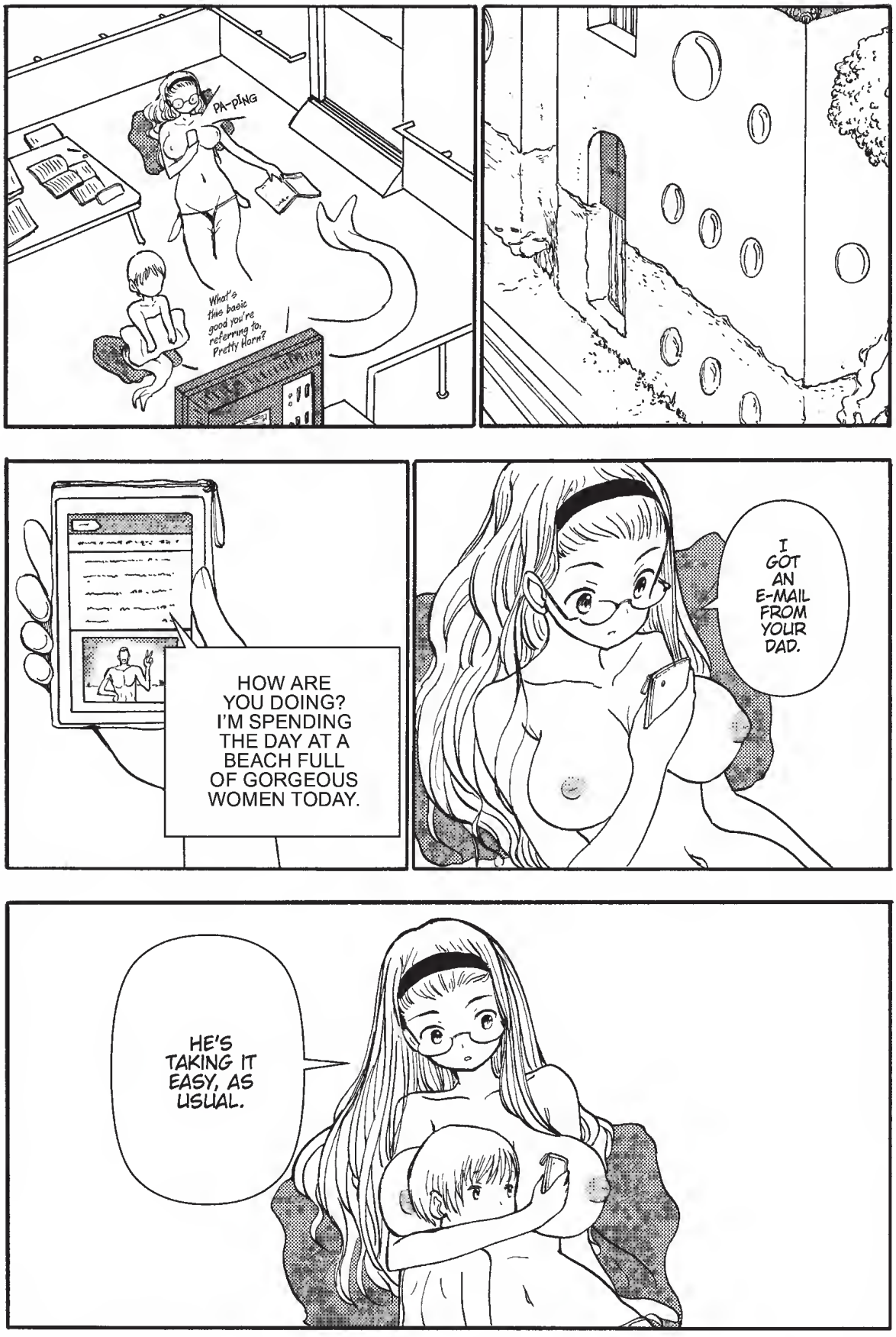

BLUB
SMACK
SMACK
CLICK

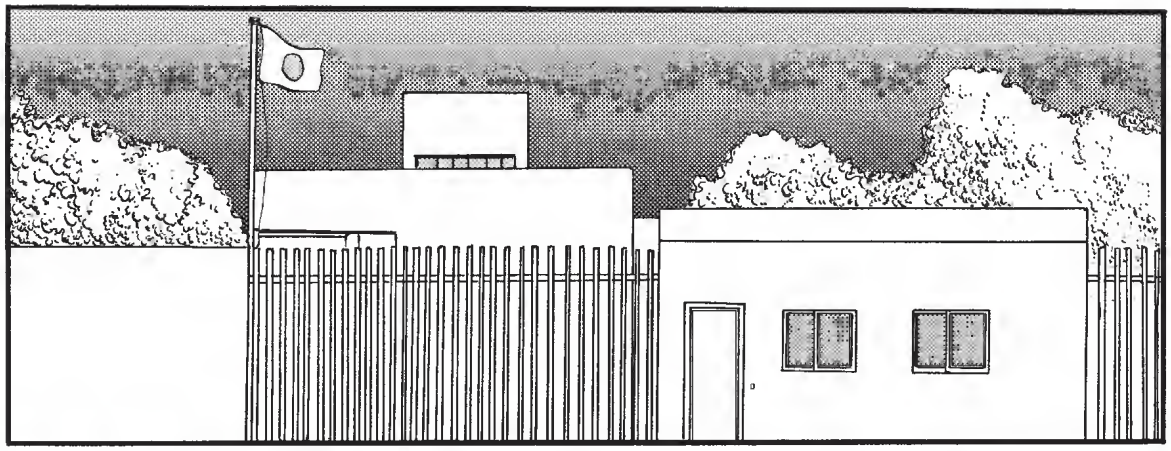


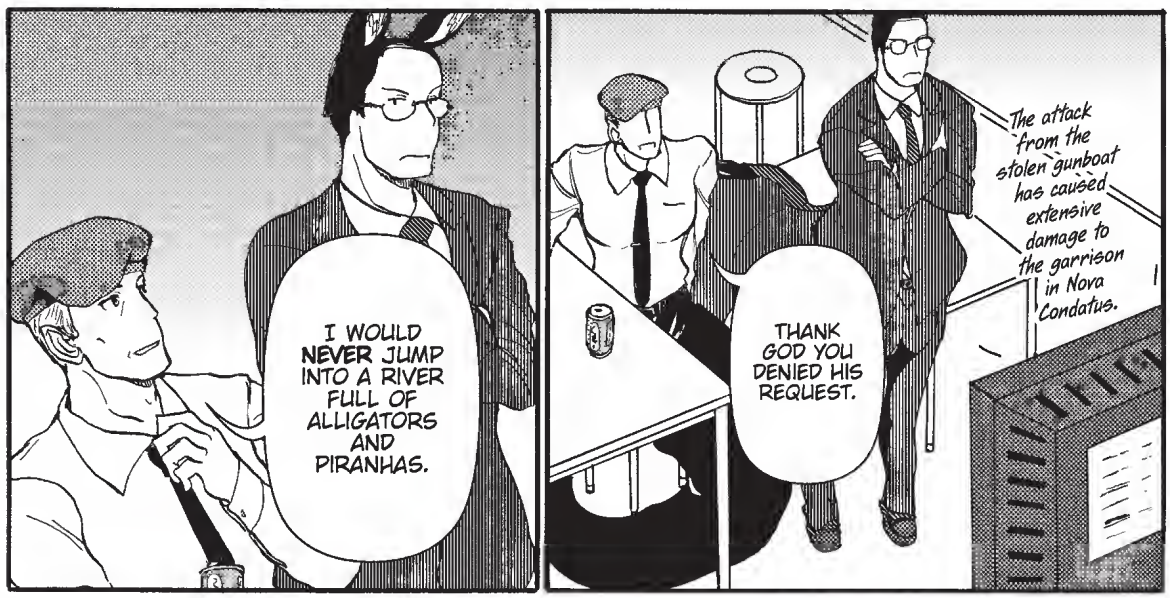

EXCELLENT WORK!

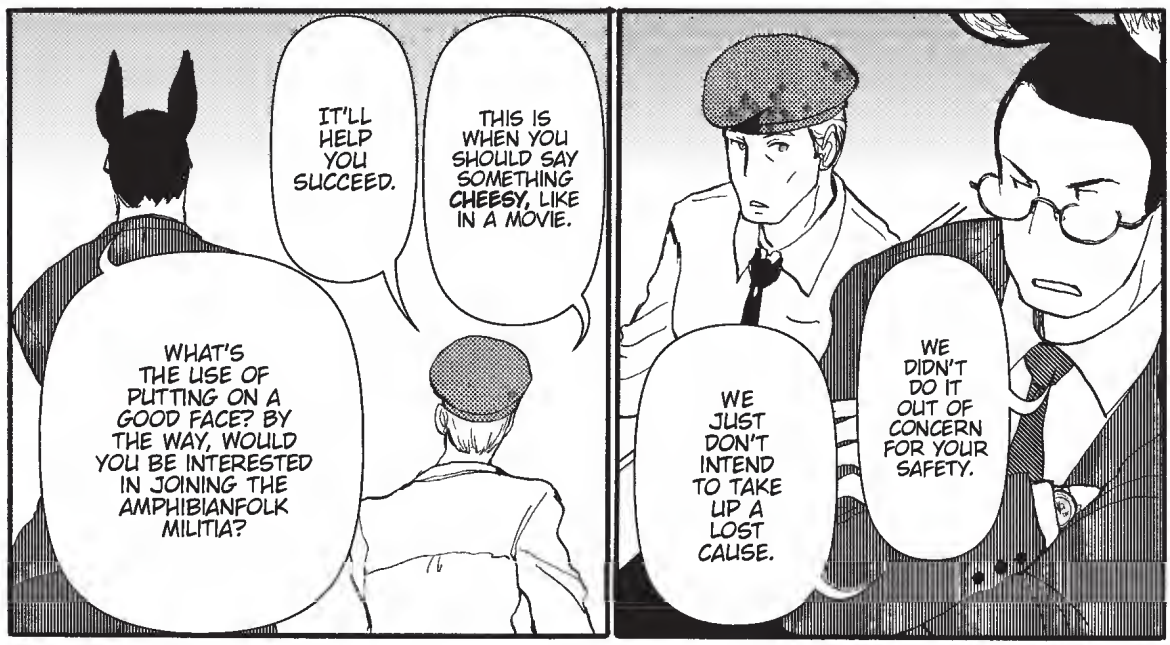

THOSE FROGS WERE GIVING US SUCH A HEADACHE, BUT YOU DEFEATED THEM HANDILY.

WE HAVE SURRENDERED THE SUSPECTS TO YOU.
WE REQUEST THAT YOU CONFORM TO INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS FOR DETAINEES.
MR. PRESIDENT, WE'VE ONLY INTERCEPTED THEIR INTRUSION ONTO OUR SHIP.
ANYWAY, THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE I'D LIKE TO DISCUSS.
WE'RE A HUMANE AND DEMOCRATIC NATION.
OF COURSE.
MAY WE HAVE THE ASSISTANCE OF YOUR MERFOLK FORCE?
WE'RE WILLING TO OFFER YOU A DEAL. THERE IS A COUNTRY THAT HAS MADE A LUCRATIVE BID TO BUILD US A HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROJECT, BUT WE HIGHLY REGARD YOUR JAPANESE TECHNOLOGY OVER THEIRS.


PA-PING
What's this basic good you're referring to, Pretty Horn?
HOW ARE YOU DOING? I'M SPENDING THE DAY AT A BEACH FULL OF GORGEOUS WOMEN TODAY.
I GOT AN E-MAIL FROM YOUR DAD.
HE'S TAKING IT EASY, AS USUAL.




I WOULD NEVER JUMP INTO A RIVER FULL OF ALLIGATORS AND PIRANHAS.
THANK GOD YOU DENIED HIS REQUEST.
The attack from the stolen gunboat has caused extensive damage to the garrison in Nova Condatus.


IT'LL HELP YOU SUCCEED.
THIS IS WHEN YOU SHOULD SAY SOMETHING CHEESY, LIKE IN A MOVIE.
WHAT'S THE USE OF PUTTING ON A GOOD FACE? BY THE WAY, WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN JOINING THE AMPHIBIANFOLK MILITIA?
WE JUST DON'T INTEND TO TAKE UP A LOST CAUSE.
WE DIDN'T DO IT OUT OF CONCERN FOR YOUR SAFETY.

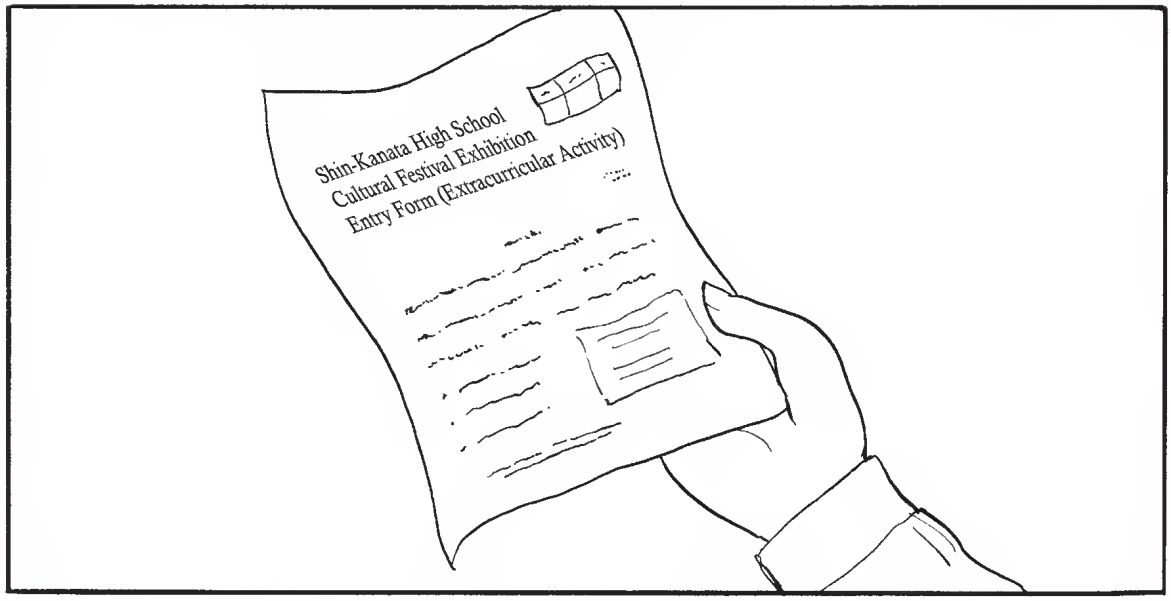
A CentaUr's Life

UNDERSTANDING AMPHIBIANFOLK PART 7: BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AMPHIBIANFOLK

AS MENTIONED BEFORE, AMPHIBIANFOLK HAVE LOST SOME OF THEIR AMPHIBIAN CHARACTERISTICS AND CAN NO LONGER BE TECHNICALLY CLASSIFIED AS AMPHIBIANS. THIS IS THE REASON WHY WE USE THE TERM "EVOLUTIONARY AMPHIBIAN" TO REFER TO THEM, BUT BIOLOGISTS MAY DISAGREE WITH THAT CLASSIFICATION AS WELL. IT'S DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN GENETIC SAMPLES FOR THEIR STUDIES FROM INTELLIGENT SPECIES, AND THE POOR CONDITIONS IN AMPHIBIANFOLK NEIGHBORHOODS ARE DELAYING THE WORK AS WELL.

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ASCERTAIN IS THAT AMPHIBIANFOLK SKIN ISN'T A MUCUS MEMBRANE, WHICH ENABLES THEM TO TOLERATE DRY CONDITIONS FAR BETTER THAN TYPICAL AMPHIBIANS. HOWEVER, PROLONGED EXPOSURE TO AN EXTREMELY DRY ENVIRONMENT, SUCH AS A DESERT, CAN CAUSE BURN-LIKE SYMPTOMS THAT COULD POTENTIALLY LEAD TO DEATH. THIS IS WHY AMPHIBIANFOLK TEND TO REMAIN IN THE JUNGLE, AND IS PERHAPS WHAT PREVENTED THEM FROM DEVELOPING THEIR CIVILIZATION IN THE WAY THAT MAMMALIANS DID. BECAUSE THEY'RE ESSENTIALLY CONFINED TO THEIR HABITABLE ZONE, THEY HAVE LIMITED RESOURCES.

THE AMPHIBIANFOLK ARE WELL-BUILT AND ATHLETIC COMPARED TO MAMMALIAN HUMANS. THEY HAVE FOUR ARMS THAT ARE ALL EXCEPTIONALLY STRONG, MOST LIKELY DEVELOPED BY THEIR HUNTING AND VIGOROUS SWIMMING HABITS. RESEARCH ON THE INDIGENOUS FISHERMEN IN THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST REVEALED THAT THEIR ARMS AND MUSCLE ATTACHMENTS WERE TWICE AS LARGE AS THOSE OF AN ORDINARY MAMMALIAN HUMAN, POSSIBLY DUE TO ROWING BOATS THROUGH ROUGH SEAS. THEIR EXCELLENT DYNAMIC VISUAL ACUITY AND REFLEXES MAY ALSO COME FROM BEING NATURAL HUNTERS. AMPHIBIANFOLK ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE SEEMS LACKLUSTER WHEN RUNNING ON A TRACK, BUT THEY MOVE VERY QUICKLY IN THE JUNGLE ENVIRONMENTS TO WHICH THEY ARE ACCUSTOMED. THEIR COGNITIVE FUNCTION AND PROCESSING SPEED IS ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO THAT EXHIBITED BY THE MAMMALIAN HUMAN BRAIN.


Shin-Kanata High School
Cultural Festival Exhibition
Entry Form (Extracurricular Activity)

CHAPTER 86

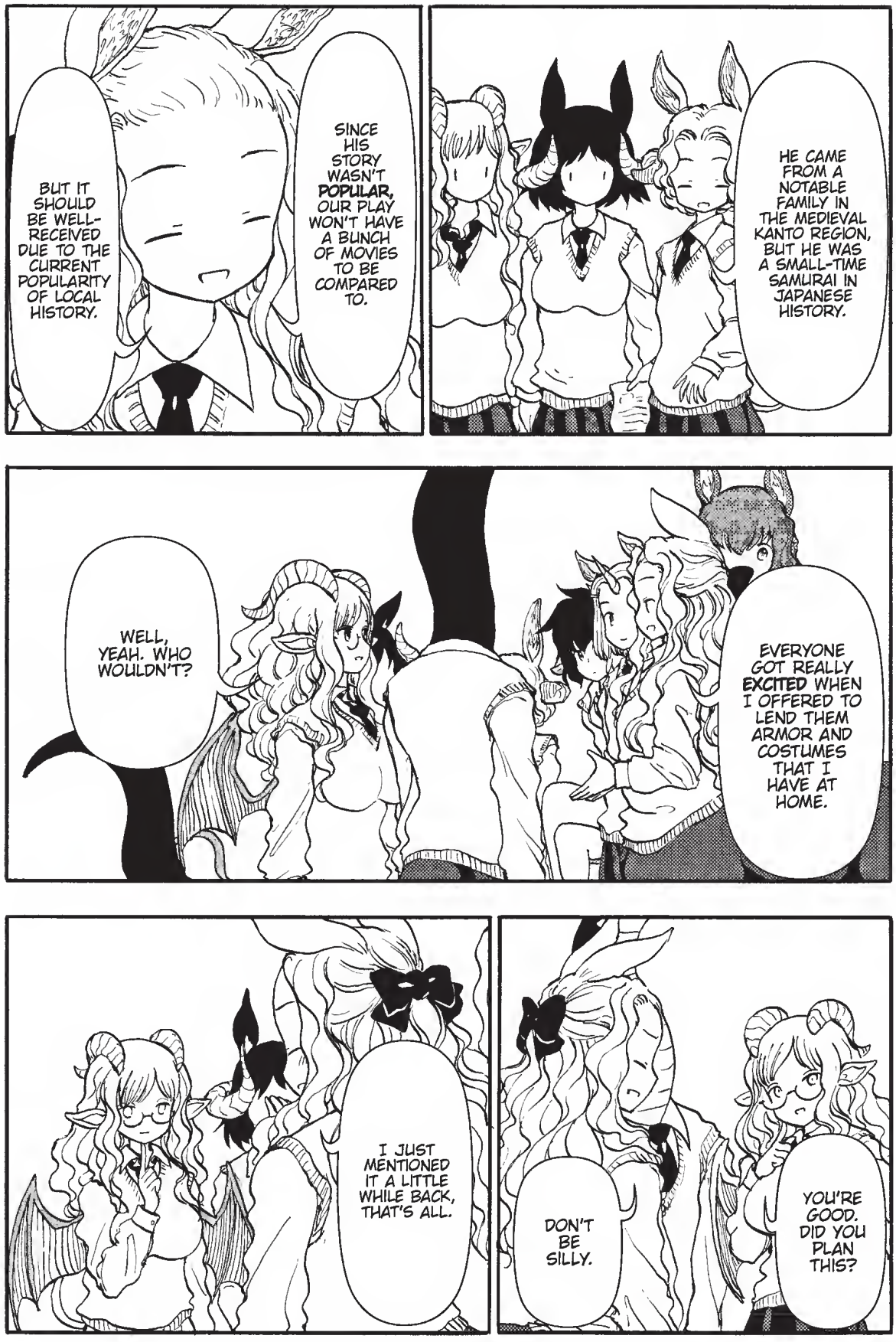
NOW, WHAT SHOULD WE DO FOR THE FESTIVAL?

You may be a girl, but this is sexual harassment, Senpai.
Hey!
WHY NOT? WE HAVE A LOT OF GOOD TALENT.
MAID CAFÉ!
NO.
HOW ABOU A COSPLAY CAFÉ?
I SAID NO.
YOU KNOW THAT OUR FESTIVAL RULES DON'T ALLOW ANY EATERIES.
WE HAVE TO DO EXHIBITIONS FOR OUR CLASSES, TOO, SO WE CAN'T PUT TOO MUCH EFFORT INTO THIS.
WAIT, DOESN'T THE TEA CEREMONY CLUB DO A CAFÉ?
THAT'S A TEA-HOUSE.
ANYTHING THAT CONFORMS TO THE CLUB ACTIVITY IS ALLOWED.
Like the candy shop for the Home Economics Club.
IN OTHER WORDS, FOR ANY CLUBS THAT DON'T HAVE ANY TOURNAMENTS LIKE OURS...
WE COULD LOSE SCHOOL APPROVAL IF WE DON'T DISPLAY OUR ACHIEVEMENTS AT THE FESTIVAL.

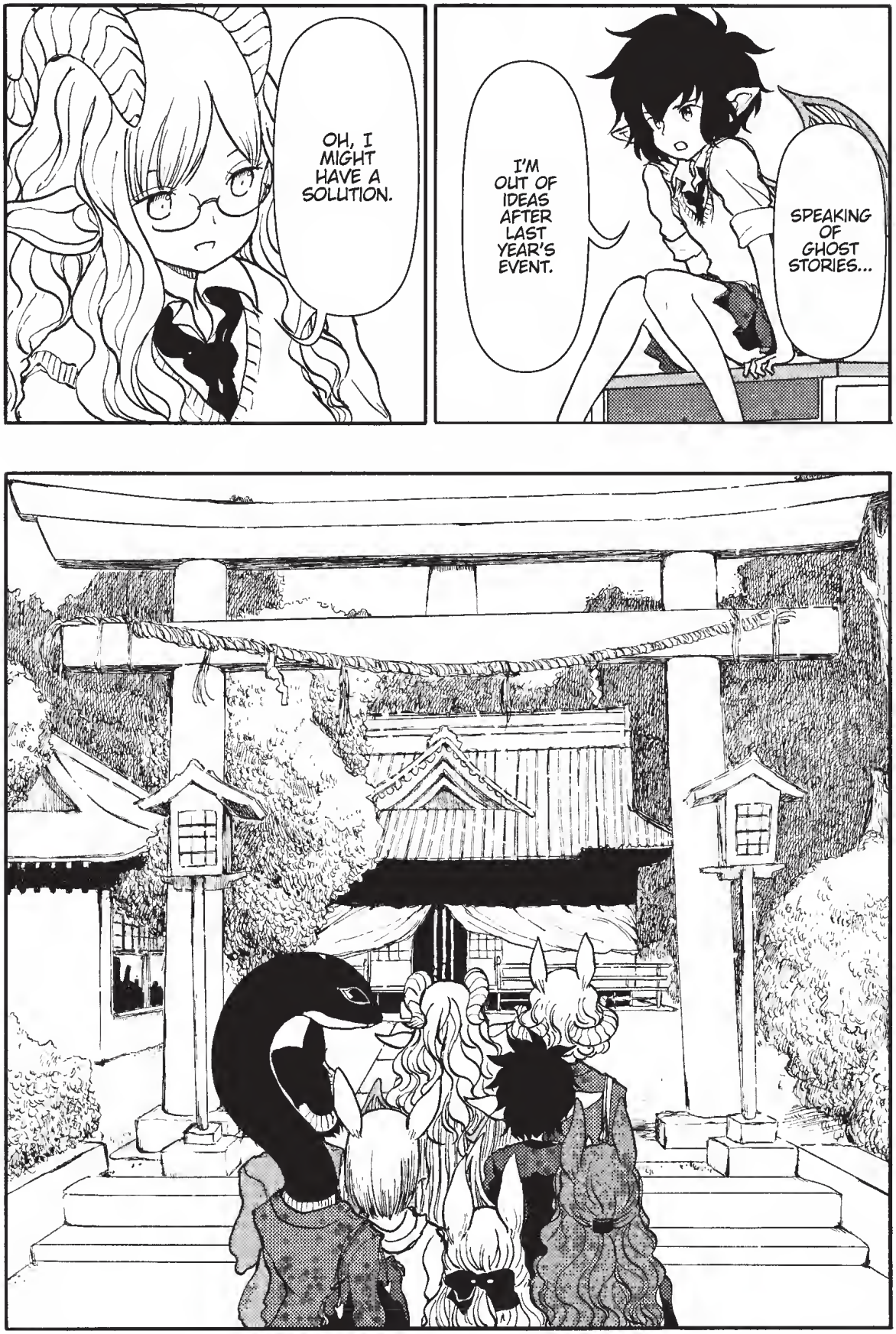
LAST YEAR, WE COMPILED A BOOK OF GHOST STORIES. WE ALSO DID THE JAPANESE KILLIFISH LIFE CYCLE EXHIBIT.
BEFORE THAT, WE DID A HAUNTED EXPEDITION AND THE TADPOLE LIFE CYCLE EXHIBIT.
SO, IS THERE ANYTHING SPECIFIC THAT WE CAN DO?
IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE SERIOUS ABOUT THIS CLUB, SO WHAT DOES IT MATTER?
IT'D UPSET SHORTY-SENPAI IF OUR CLUB WAS DISSOLVED.
THOSE ARE TOO **WEIRD.**
I THINK I GET THE GIST OF IT.
IT'S ABOUT DOING SOMETHING RELATED TO FOLKLORE AND SCIENCE, RIGHT?
We'll make them spit out the details.
THEY'RE **SUPPOSED** TO COME TO THE FESTIVAL. THEY'LL PROBABLY EXPLAIN THEN.
THAT REMINDS ME, I HEARD THAT THOSE TWO ARE DATING.

OH, REALLY?
MY CLASS IS ACTUALLY HAVING AN ISSUE WITH OUR EXHIBIT.
NAH, NOT REALLY.
WHAT, YOU WANNA DO SOME-THING MORE MOTIVAT-ING?
WHAT'S IT ABOUT?
THAT'S A GOOD ONE.
WE'RE DOING A PLAY CALLED MIRAGE.
First-years are required to do a play.
YOU KNOW HOW CRITICS AND OVERLY TALKATIVE SALESMEN STICK THEIR NOSES IN EVERYONE'S BUSINESS AND ACT LIKE THEY UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING?
THERE'S THIS BURGLAR WHO BARRICADES HIMSELF IN AND ALLEGES RACIAL ISSUES, AND THESE CULTURAL FIGURES TRY TO CONVINCE HIM THAT THEY UNDERSTAND HIM.

IT'S A SATIRICAL PLAY ABOUT THE INTELLECTUAL DISHONESTY OF PEOPLE WHO ONLY CLAIM TO BE SMART.
Is it the 'casting?
IT SOUNDS INTERESTING, AND THE ACTING AND PROPS SHOULDN'T BE TOO HARD.
SO WHAT'S THE PROB-LEM?
THERE ARE A LOT OF SHREWD PEOPLE AT OUR SCHOOL.
BUT THERE ARE ALSO A LOT OF FOOLS. SOME OF THE CLASS WANTED TO AVOID SATIRE.
WE JUST COULDN'T COME TO AN AGREE-MENT.
HOW AWFUL.
HOW ABOUT YOUR CLASS, AYAKA-CHAN?
YES, WE'VE SETTLED ON LORD TEN-AN STORY.
WASN'T LORD TEN-AN THE DAIMYO WHO RULED THIS AREA DURING THE SENGOKU PERIOD?

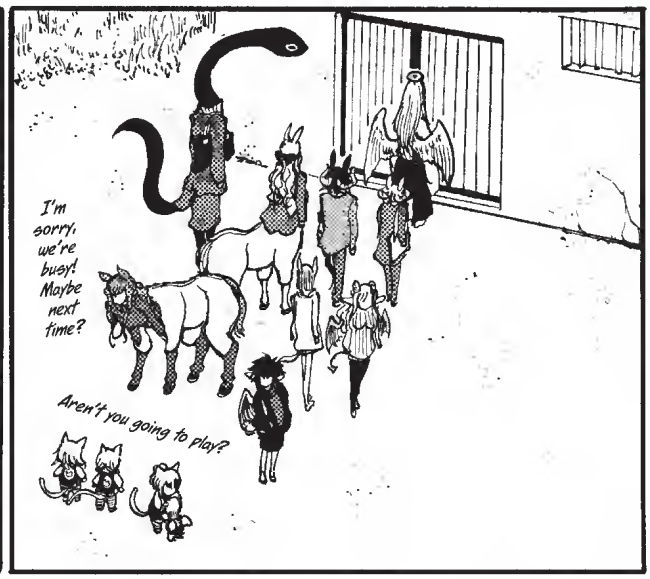

HE CAME FROM A NOTABLE FAMILY IN THE MEDIEVAL KANTO REGION, BUT HE WAS A SMALL-TIME SAMURAI IN JAPANESE HISTORY.
SINCE HIS STORY WASN'T **POPULAR,** OUR PLAY WON'T HAVE A BUNCH OF MOVIES TO BE COMPARED TO.
BUT IT SHOULD BE WELL-RECEIVED DUE TO THE CURRENT POPULARITY OF LOCAL HISTORY.
EVERYONE GOT REALLY **EXCITED** WHEN I OFFERED TO LEND THEM ARMOR AND COSTUMES THAT I HAVE AT HOME.
WELL, YEAH. WHO WOULDN'T?
YOU'RE GOOD. DID YOU PLAN THIS?
DON'T BE SILLY.
I JUST MENTIONED IT A LITTLE WHILE BACK, THAT'S ALL.

SO, WHAT'S THE PLAN? IF WE'RE DOING GHOST STORIES...
WE CAN... USE THE ANNEX AT MY HOUSE.
I HEAR THAT REAL ARMOR IS SO HEAVY THAT YOU CAN'T BREATHE IN IT.
WE'LL LEAVE THE HARD WORK FOR THE BOYS.
HUH? I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T BELIEVE IN OCCULT HORROR.
I DON'T.
YOUR PLACE SCARES ME.
I'M SORRY, I DON'T THINK I CAN MAKE IT.
ME NEITHER.
GWOOO...
BUT IT STILL MAKES ME A LITTLE BIT UNEASY.
THAT ANNEX IS DARK AND CREAKS WHENEVER THE WIND BLOWS. AND THERE ARE MYSTERIOUS BUDDHA STATUES AND PAINTINGS, TOO.

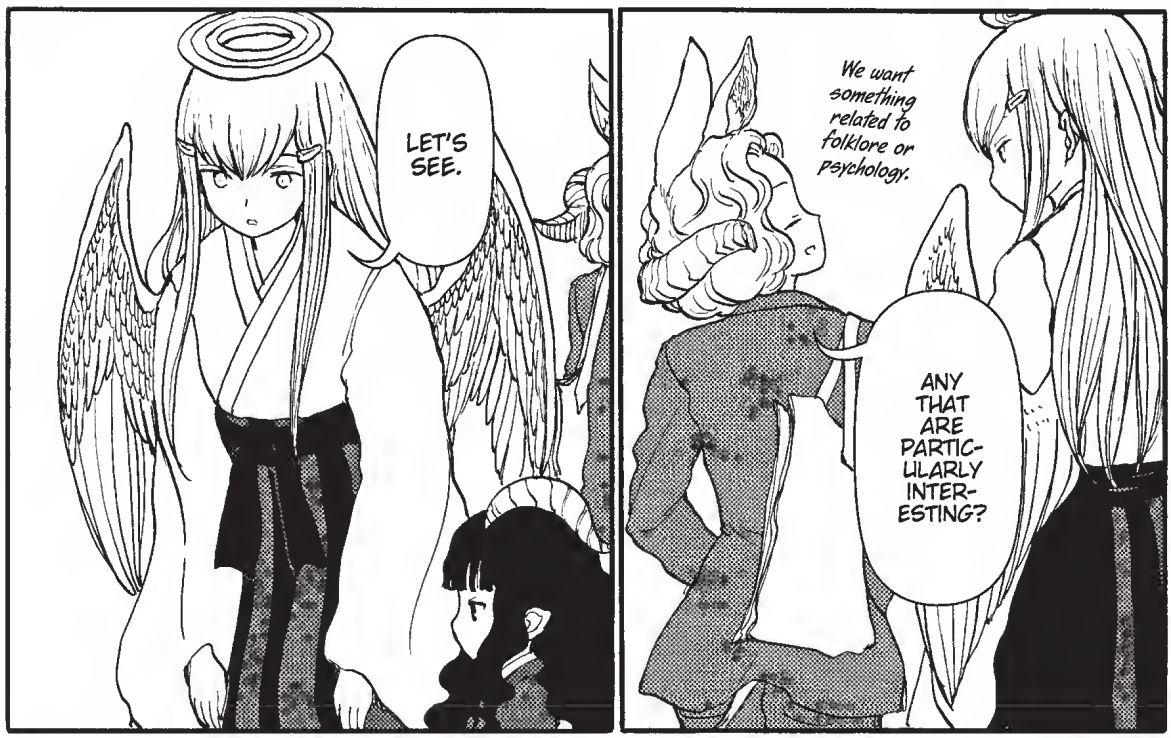

OH, I MIGHT HAVE A SOLUTION.
I'M OUT OF IDEAS AFTER LAST YEAR'S EVENT.
SPEAKING OF GHOST STORIES...

SO, WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
Come on.
Hi, Sue-chan!
Yay!
It's the big big sister!
Who are you?

WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IS KEPT IN HERE.

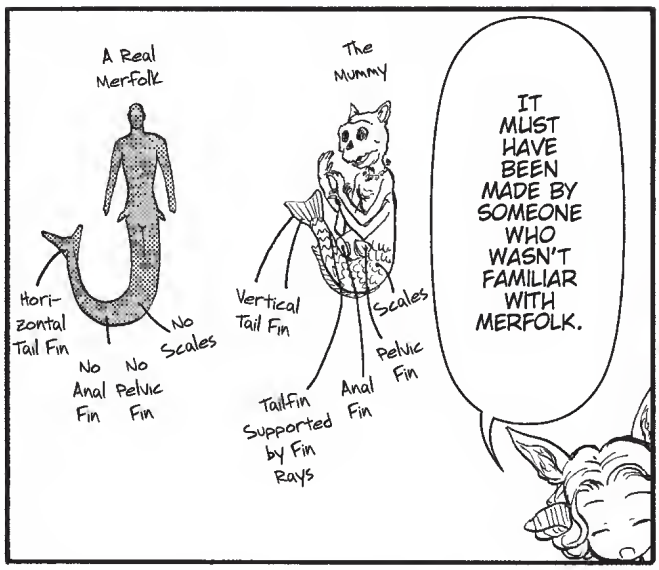

I'm sorry, we're busy! Maybe next time?
Aren't you going to play?

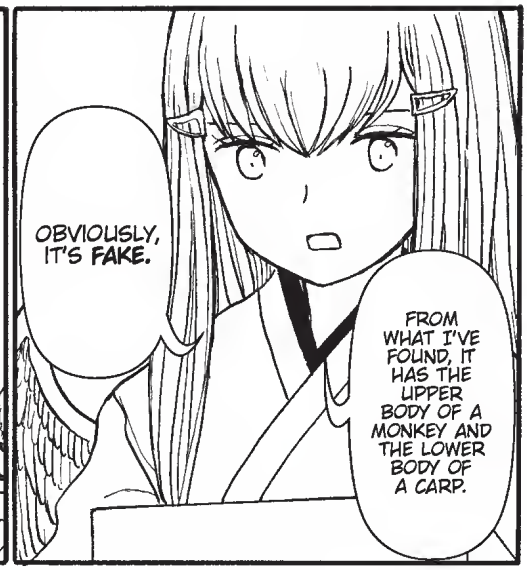
We burn or throw them away after sorting them.
THESE ARE EXORCISM AND OTAKIAGE REQUESTS.

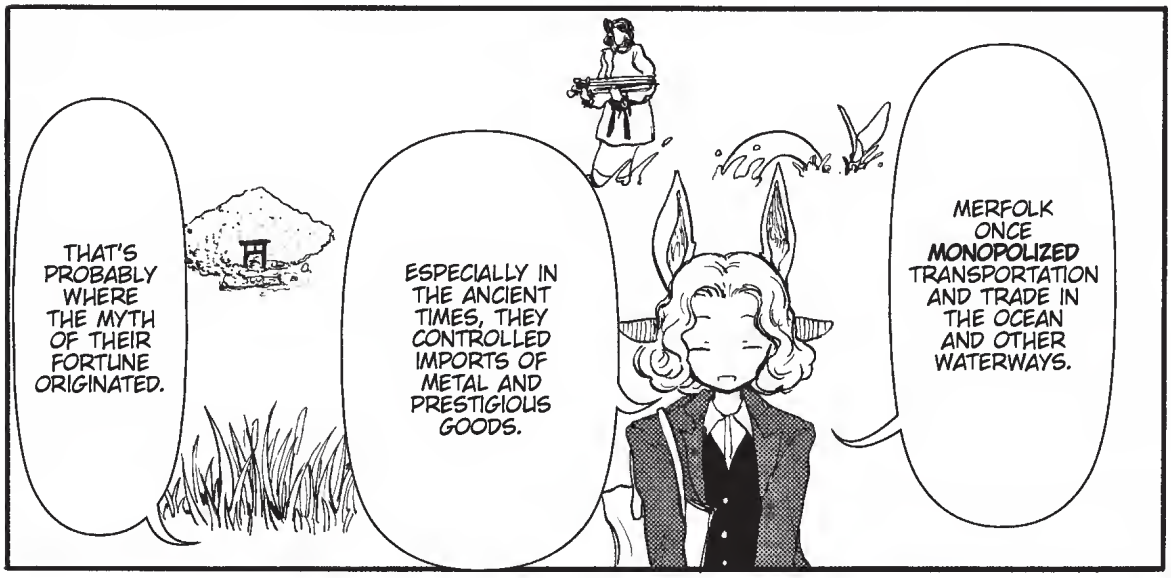

LET'S SEE.
We want something related to folklore or psychology.
ANY THAT ARE PARTIC-ULARLY INTER-ESTING?

LET ME SEE.
THIS MIGHT MEET YOUR NEEDS.
HERE'S ONE.
HEY, BE CAREFUL WITH THE WALL!
BAM
I KNOW THAT'S A MERFOLK.
BUT THE FISH TAIL LOOKS SO REAL.
Even though merfolk are actually mammals, it shouldn't be surprising.

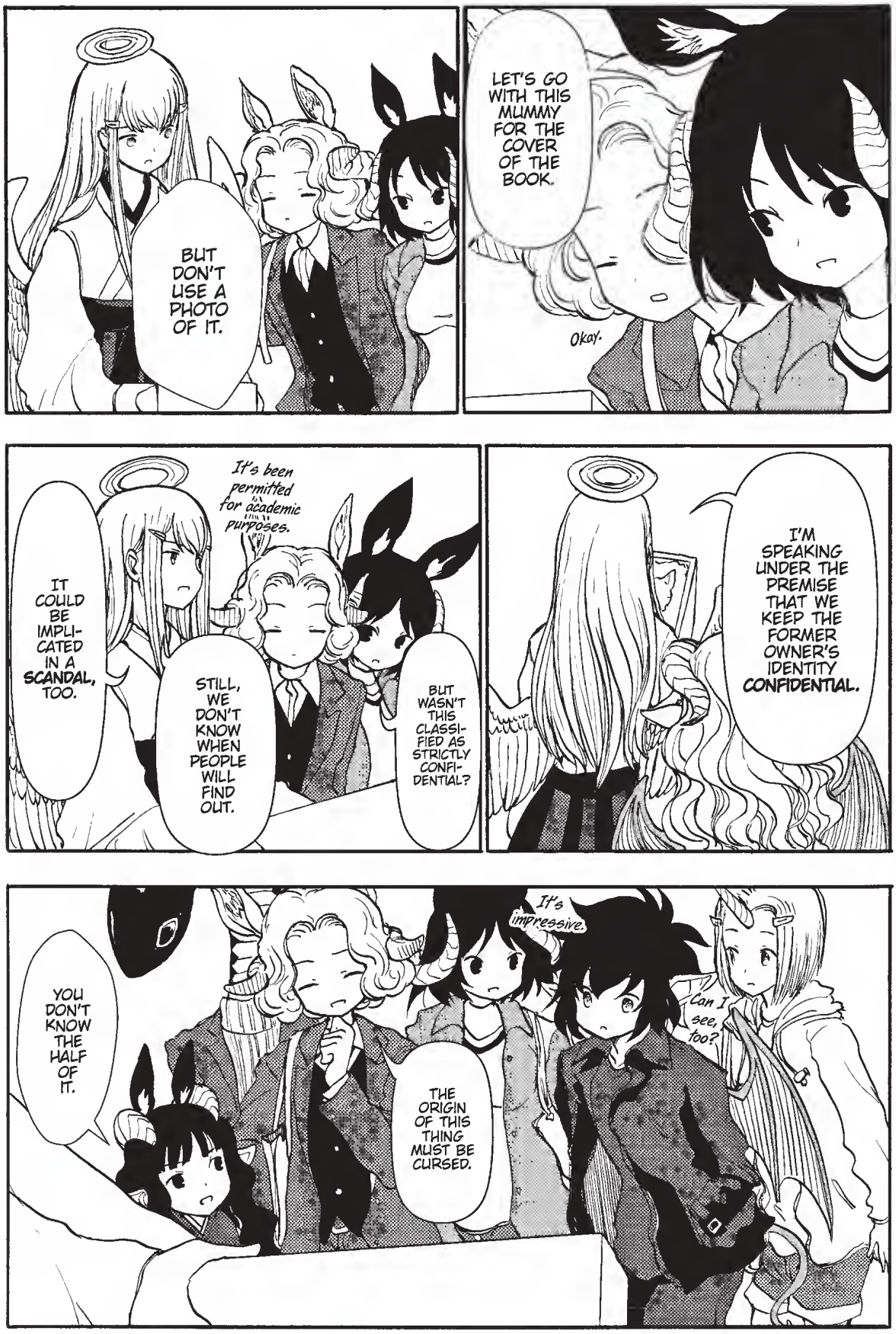
LATER, THE OWNER FOUND IT WHILE HE WAS LOOKING FOR SOMETHING FOR AN ESTATE APPRAISAL.
IT WAS PRESERVED AND KEPT IN HIS STOREHOUSE.
ITS ORIGINAL OWNER SAID THAT HIS ANCESTOR BOUGHT THIS MUMMY BECAUSE MERFOLK SUPPOSEDLY BRING FORTUNE.
ON RAINY DAYS, MERFOLK WOULD COME TO HIS HOUSE AND PUT A CURSE ON IT.
BUT THEN, THE VALUE OF THE CURRENCIES IN EMERGING MARKETS BOTTOMED OUT.
HE AIRED IT OUT AND BUILT A HOME SHRINE FOR IT.
HOW WOULD I KNOW? I'M ONLY TELLING YOU WHAT I HEARD.
HOW DID A MERFOLK WALK ON HIS TAIL?


A Real Merfolk
Hori-zontal Tail Fin
No Scales
No Anal Fin
No Pelvic Fin
The Mummy
Vertical Tail Fin
Scales
Pelvic Fin
Tailfin Supported by Fin Rays
Anal Fin
IT MUST HAVE BEEN MADE BY SOMEONE WHO WASN'T FAMILIAR WITH MERFOLK.


OBVIOUSLY, IT'S **FAKE.**
FROM WHAT I'VE FOUND, IT HAS THE UPPER BODY OF A MONKEY AND THE LOWER BODY OF A CARP.


THAT'S PROBABLY WHERE THE MYTH OF THEIR FORTUNE ORIGINATED.
ESPECIALLY IN THE ANCIENT TIMES, THEY CONTROLLED IMPORTS OF METAL AND PRESTIGIOUS GOODS.
MERFOLK ONCE **MONOPOLIZED** TRANSPORTATION AND TRADE IN THE OCEAN AND OTHER WATERWAYS.

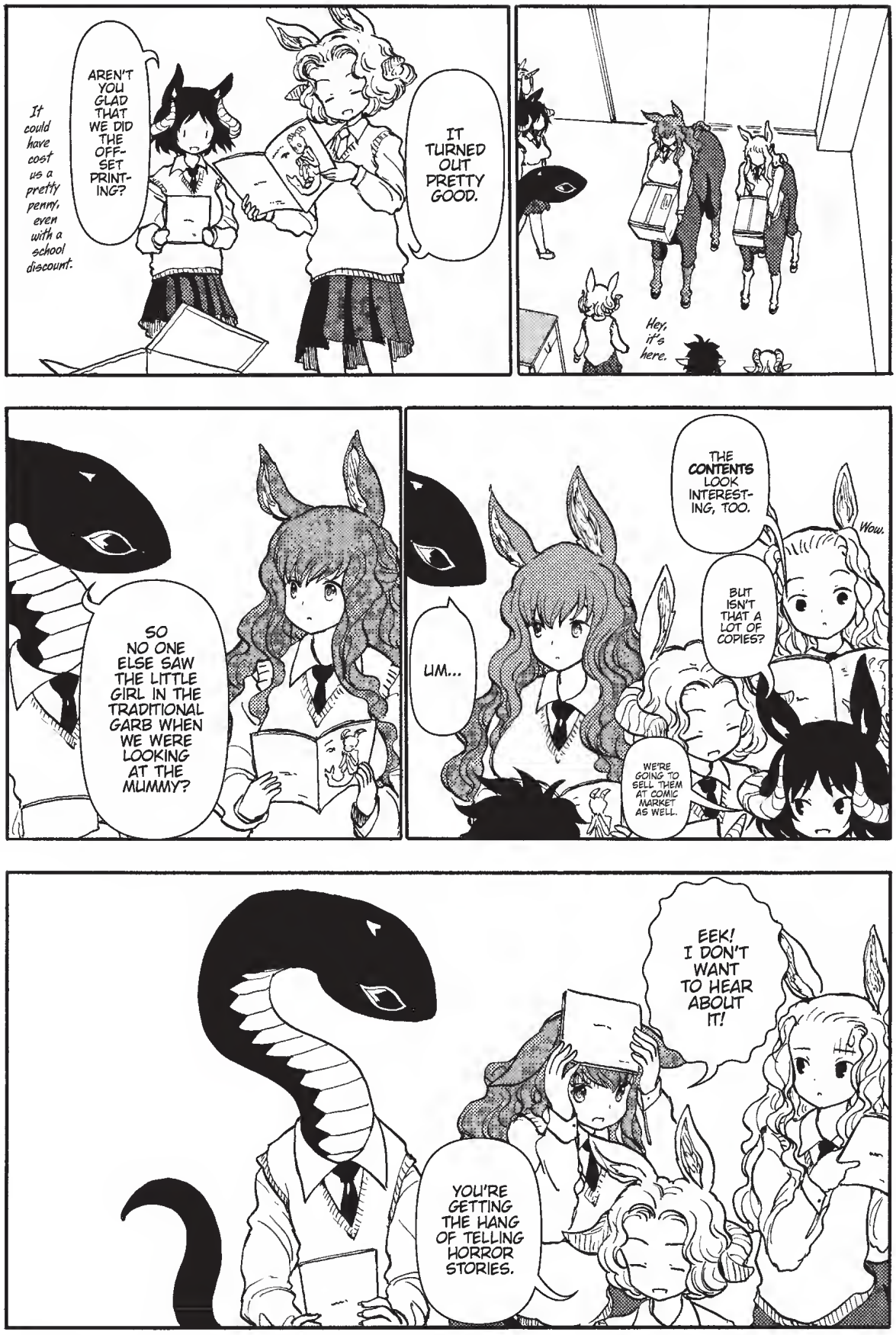
WHAT IF WE FEATURE JUST THE MUMMY STORY?
GREAT. THIS IS ALL COMING TOGETHER WELL.


BUT DON'T USE A PHOTO OF IT.
LET'S GO WITH THIS MUMMY FOR THE COVER OF THE BOOK.
Okay.
I'M SPEAKING UNDER THE PREMISE THAT WE KEEP THE FORMER OWNER'S IDENTITY CONFIDENTIAL.
BUT WASN'T THIS CLASSIFIED AS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL?
It's been permitted for academic purposes.
STILL, WE DON'T KNOW WHEN PEOPLE WILL FIND OUT.
IT COULD BE IMPLICATED IN A SCANDAL, TOO.
It's impressive.
Can I see, too?
THE ORIGIN OF THIS THING MUST BE CURSED.
YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT.

THAT'S WHY IT'S CURSED.
AND I MEAN A LOT.
A LOT OF CURSED OBJECTS WERE OFFERED TO THIS MUMMY, BECAUSE IT WAS RECOGNIZED AS A GOD.
WE'LL BURN IT BY THE END OF THE YEAR.
NO.
PRESIDENT, ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP THIS IN HERE FOREVER?
THERE IS A CURSE.
SO STUDY IT WHILE YOU CAN.
ISN'T THAT A WASTE?
THAT WAS THE DEAL WE MADE WITH THE OWNER.

CAN'T BE SEEN BY LIVING BEINGS.
A GRUDGE HELD BY A FAKE GOD...
WHAT'S WRONG?
IT'S... NOTH-ING.
IS THAT A BUG?
IT CAN'T AFFECT THEM AT ALL.
GODS AND CURSES EXIST WITHIN THE SAME BELIEF STRUCTURE, THE SAME JOINT ILLUSION. THE SAME PLANE.

SNAP
SNAP
SNAP
IT IS INSOLENT TO BARE FANGS TO A GOD.
RAWR!
SOME-THING LESS SCARY, YEAH?
SHOW US SOME OTHER STUFF, WHILE WE'RE HERE.
CHOMP
CHOMP
Sue-chan, come on!
IT'S NO FUN WHEN THEY DON'T NOTICE ME. I'LL GO SEE THE PRINCESS.
BURP
HM.


It could have cost us a pretty penny, even with a school discount.
AREN'T YOU GLAD THAT WE DID THE OFF-SET PRINTING?
IT TURNED OUT PRETTY GOOD.
Hey, it's here.
SO NO ONE ELSE SAW THE LITTLE GIRL IN THE TRADITIONAL GARB WHEN WE WERE LOOKING AT THE MUMMY?
UM...
WE'RE GOING TO SELL THEM AT COMIC MARKET AS WELL.
BUT ISN'T THAT A LOT OF COPIES?
THE CONTENTS LOOK INTERESTING, TOO.
Wow.
YOU'RE GETTING THE HANG OF TELLING HORROR STORIES.
EEK! I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT!

A CentaUr's Life

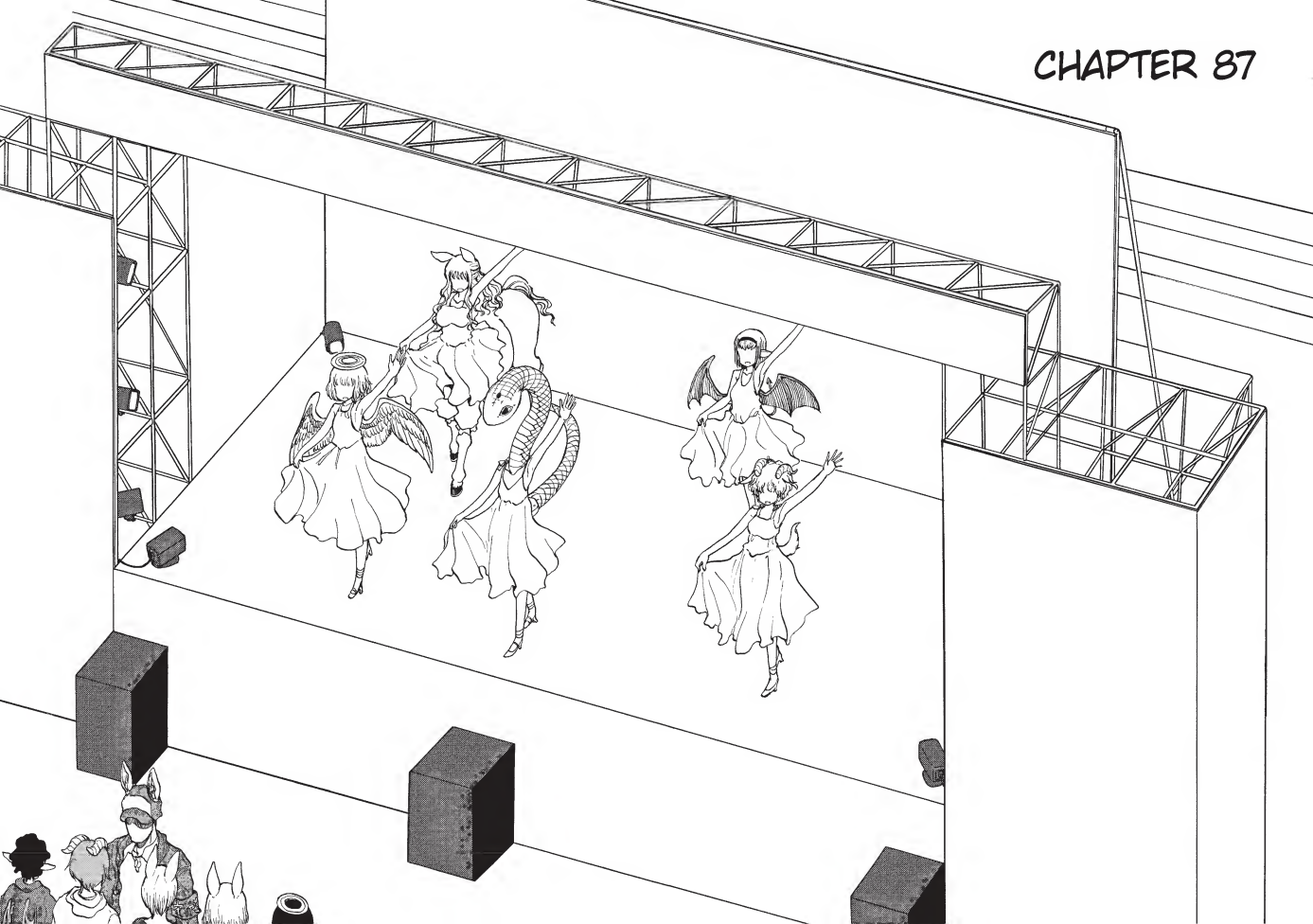
UNDERSTANDING AMPHIBIANFOLK PART 8: THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT MILITIA GROUP, CTHULCTHUL

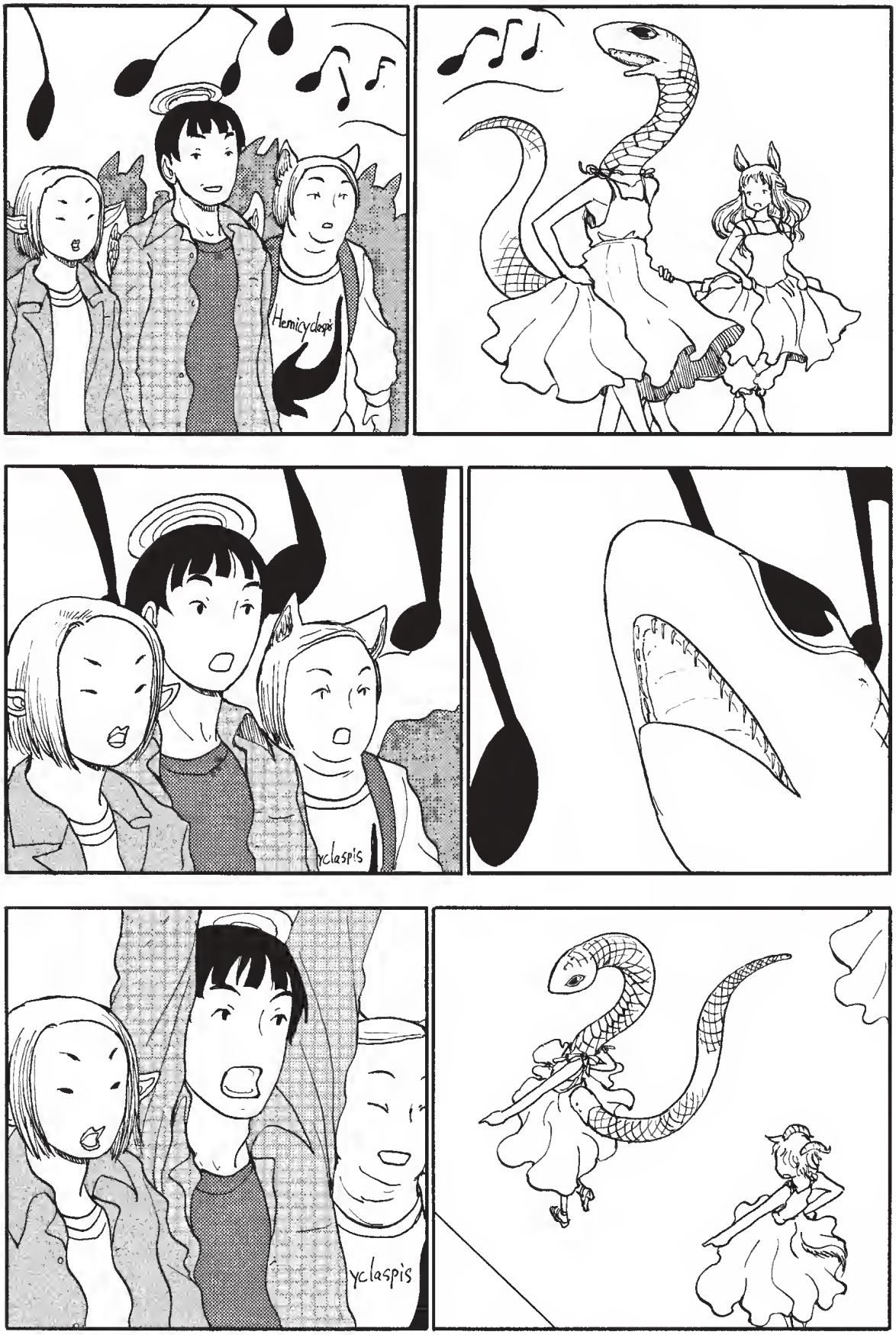
CTHULCTHUL IS AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT MILITIA, FORMED BY AMPHIBIANFOLK, WHOSE MISSION IS TO PROTECT THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF THEIR PEOPLE AND TO ACQUIRE AUTONOMOUS GOVERNMENT. BUT THE EXISTENCE OF THIS GROUP RAISES IMPORTANT QUESTIONS: HOW WERE THE DIVIDED AMPHIBIANFOLK TRIBES, WHO HAVE MAINTAINED A PALEOLITHIC LIFE-STYLE DESPITE THEIR RAPID MODERNIZATION, ABLE TO FORM A UNIFIED ORGANIZATION AND OBTAIN MODERN MILITARY-GRADE WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT?

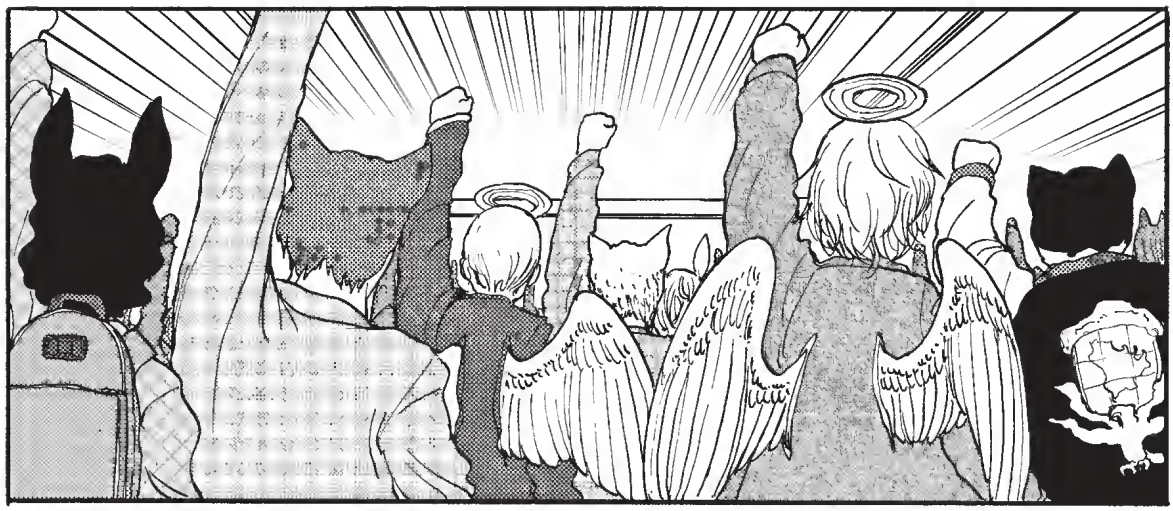
ONE THEORY IS THAT THEY ACQUIRED THE WEAPONRY WHEN THEY CHASED MAMMALIAN HUMANS OUT OF THEIR OCCUPATION ZONE, WHICH HAPPENED TO BE AN EXCELLENT HIDING PLACE FOR MAMMALIAN DRUG CARTELS AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT GUERRILLAS. THE FACT THAT CTHULCTHUL'S EQUIPMENT VARIED FROM PERSON TO PERSON IN THE BEGINNING MAY LEND CREDENCE TO THIS THEORY. OTHERS SEE THIS AS A PROXY WAR BETWEEN TRADITIONAL NATIONS, INCLUDING TAWANTINSUYU, AND A RISING AGGRESSOR NATION ESTABLISHED BY CONQUISTADORS IN SOUTH AMERICA. YET ANOTHER THEORY IS THAT A PROMINENT AMPHIBIANFOLK ENTREPRENEUR, JEAN ROUSSEAU, ORGANIZED THE GROUP AND SECURED BACKING FROM WESTERN COUNTRIES. WHATEVER THE CASE, JAPAN HOPES ONLY FOR PEACE. PARTICIPATION IN A MILITIA GROUP THAT AGGRAVATES THE SITUATION SHOULD BE PROHIBITED BY LAW.

ANTARCTIC GIRL
The 42nd
Kanata University
THAT'S PROBABLY BECAUSE IT IS EXOTIC.
Hemicyclaspis
I THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE TOO EXOTIC FOR PEOPLE, BUT IT'S PRETTY PACKED.
No pushing!
You need a ticket to enter.
Keep moving, once you're inside.
THAT'S NOT ENOUGH TO MAKE ME IDOLIZE HER.
I HEARD THAT SHE'S A GOOD SINGER.
SO IS TV SHUTO.
THE THK NEWS CREW IS HERE.
TV Shuto
THK

CHAPTER 87

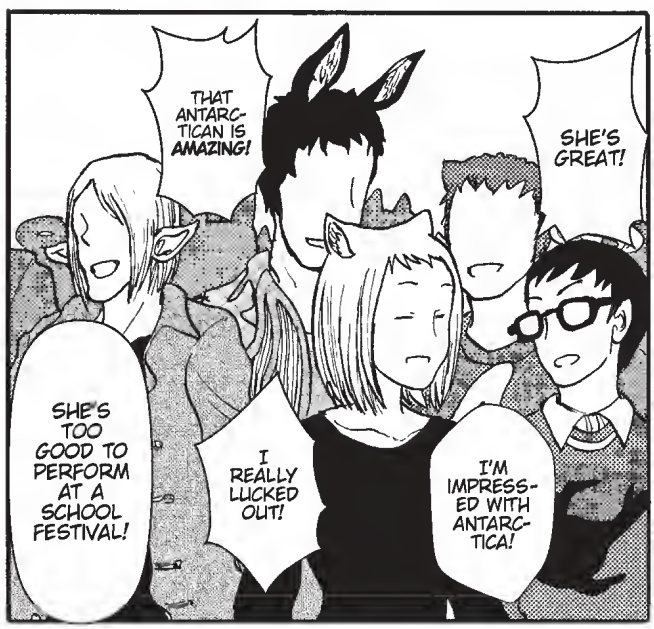


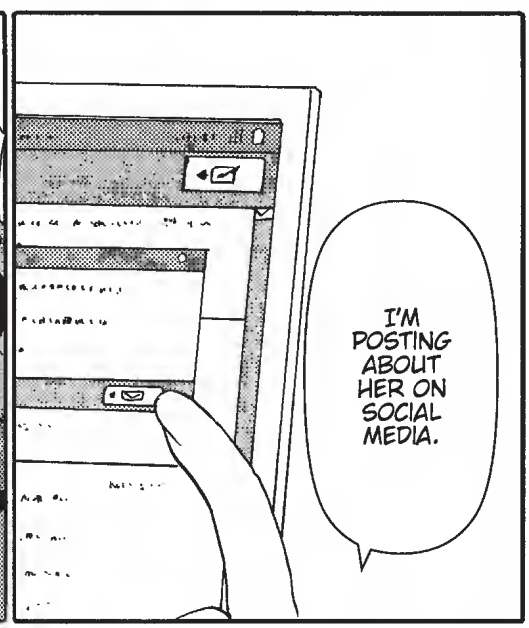

Hemicyclaspis
yclaspis
yclaspis

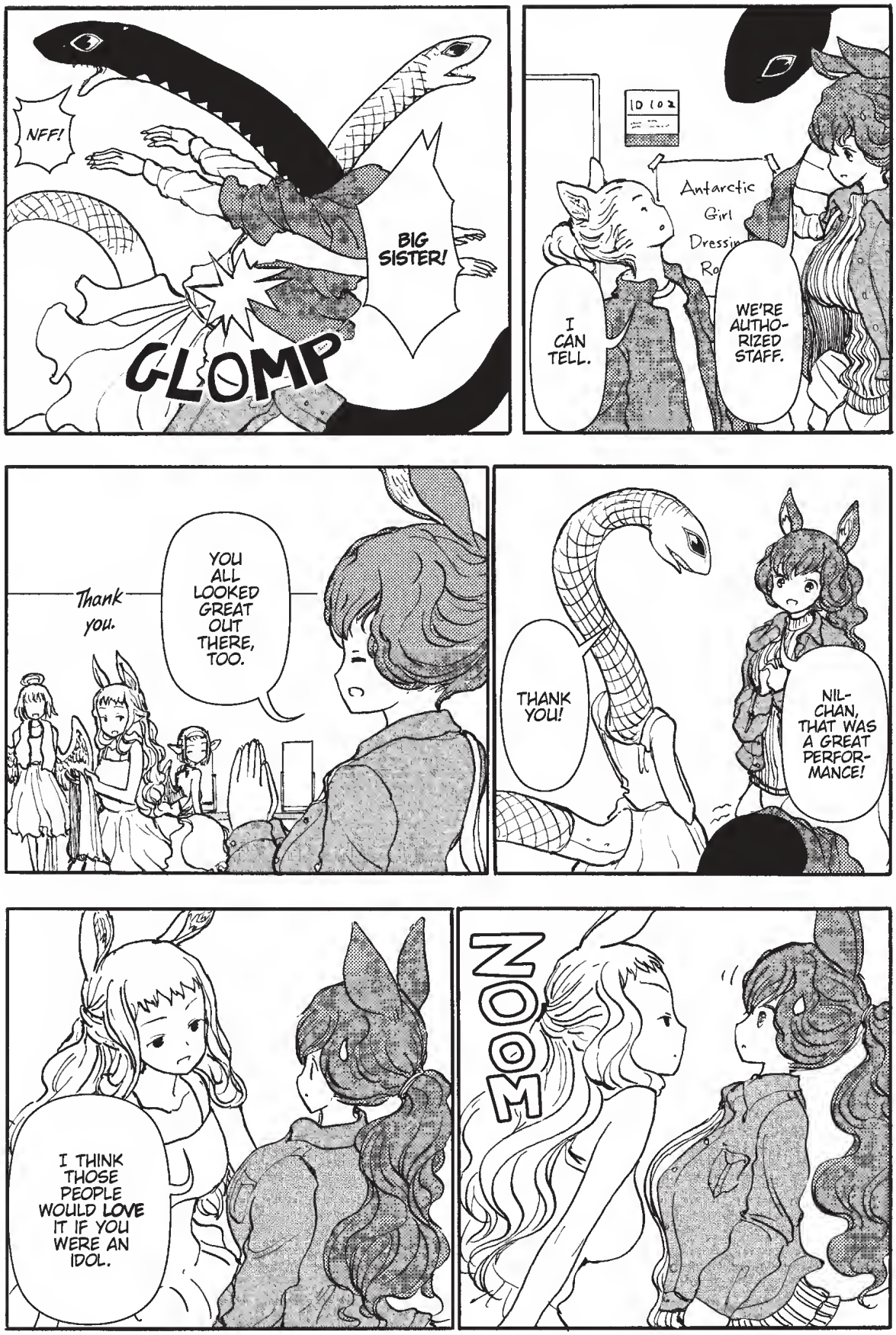


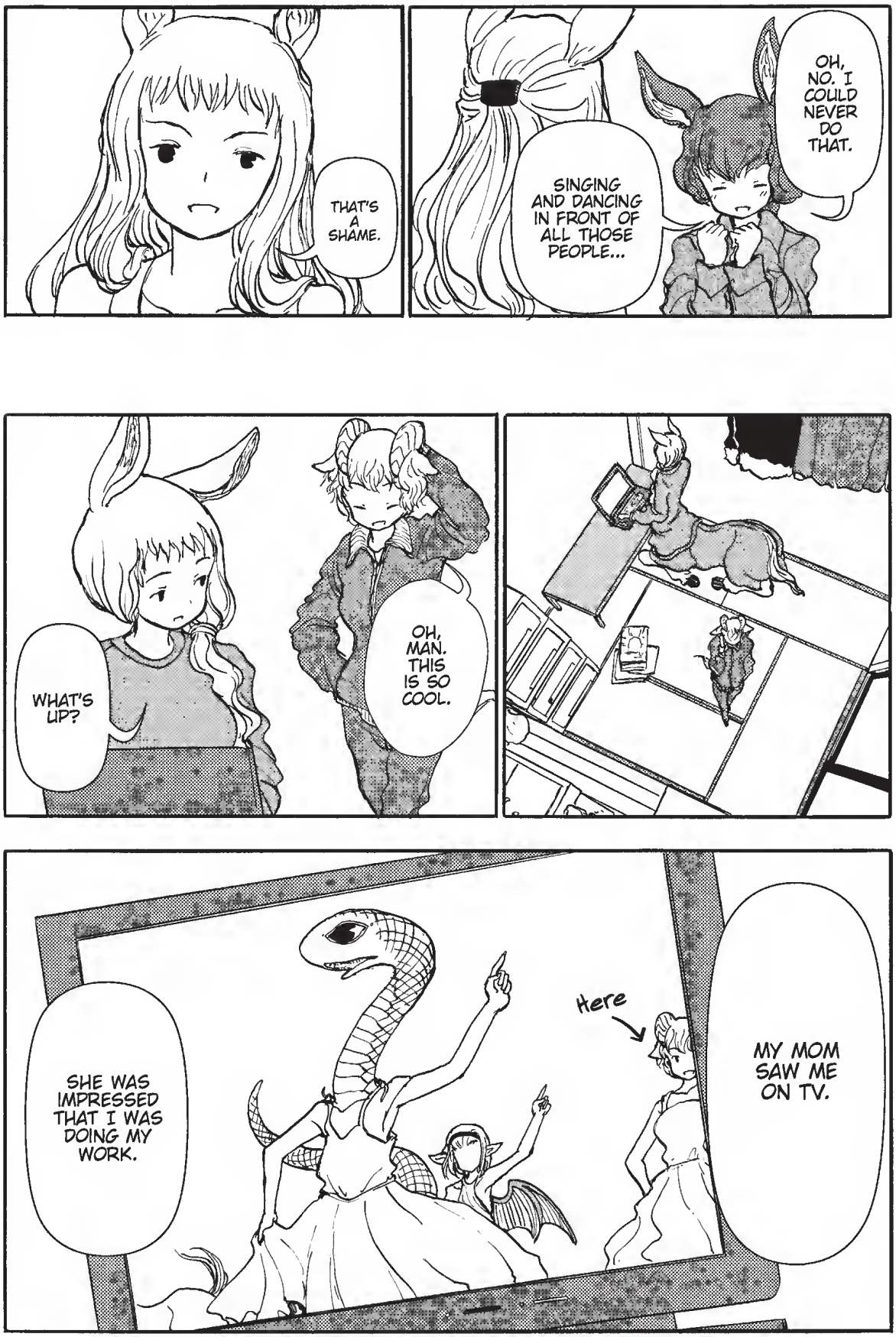
WHAT ARE YOU DOING ON YOUR PHONE?!

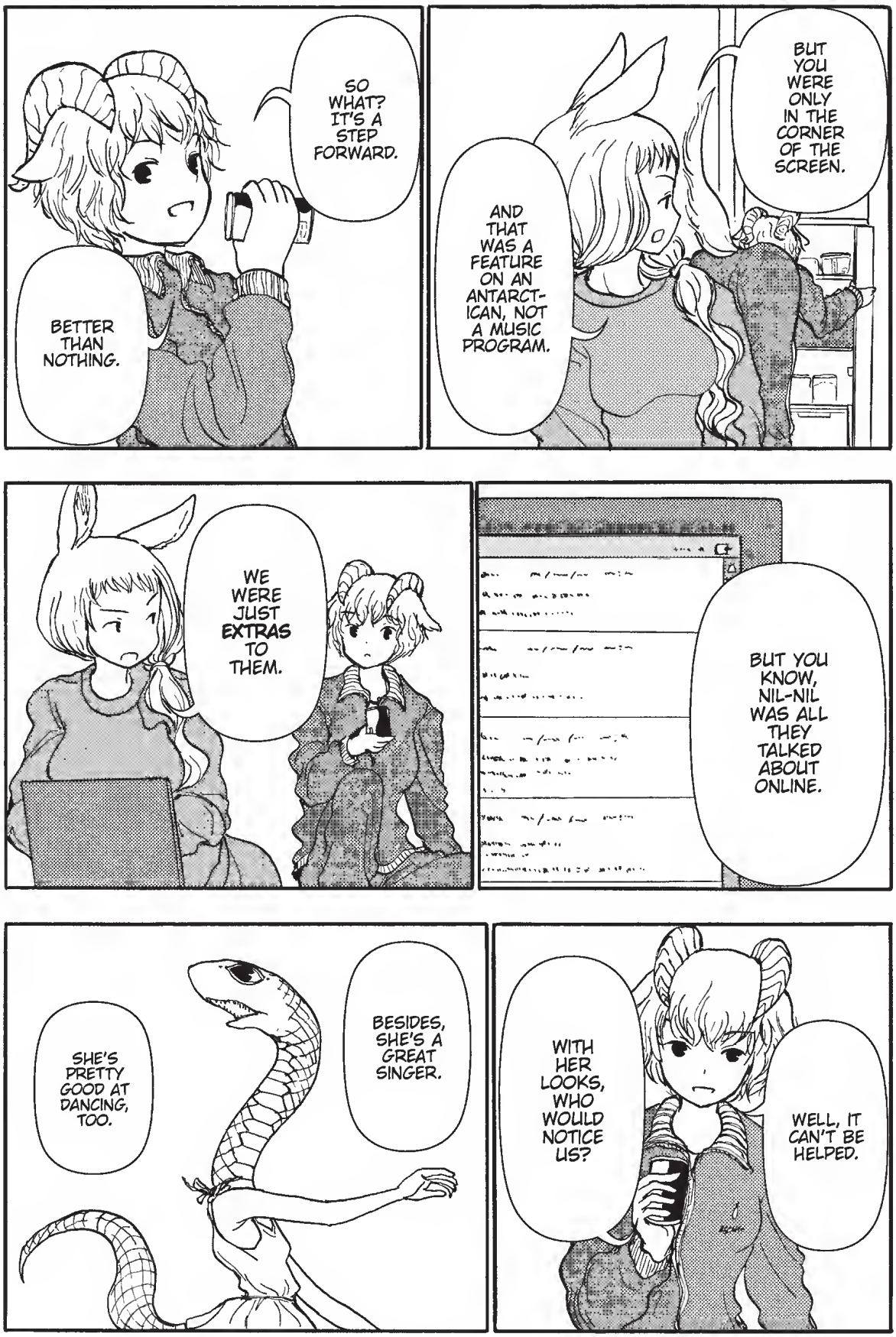
THIS IS AWE-SOME!
I LOVE HER SING-ING!

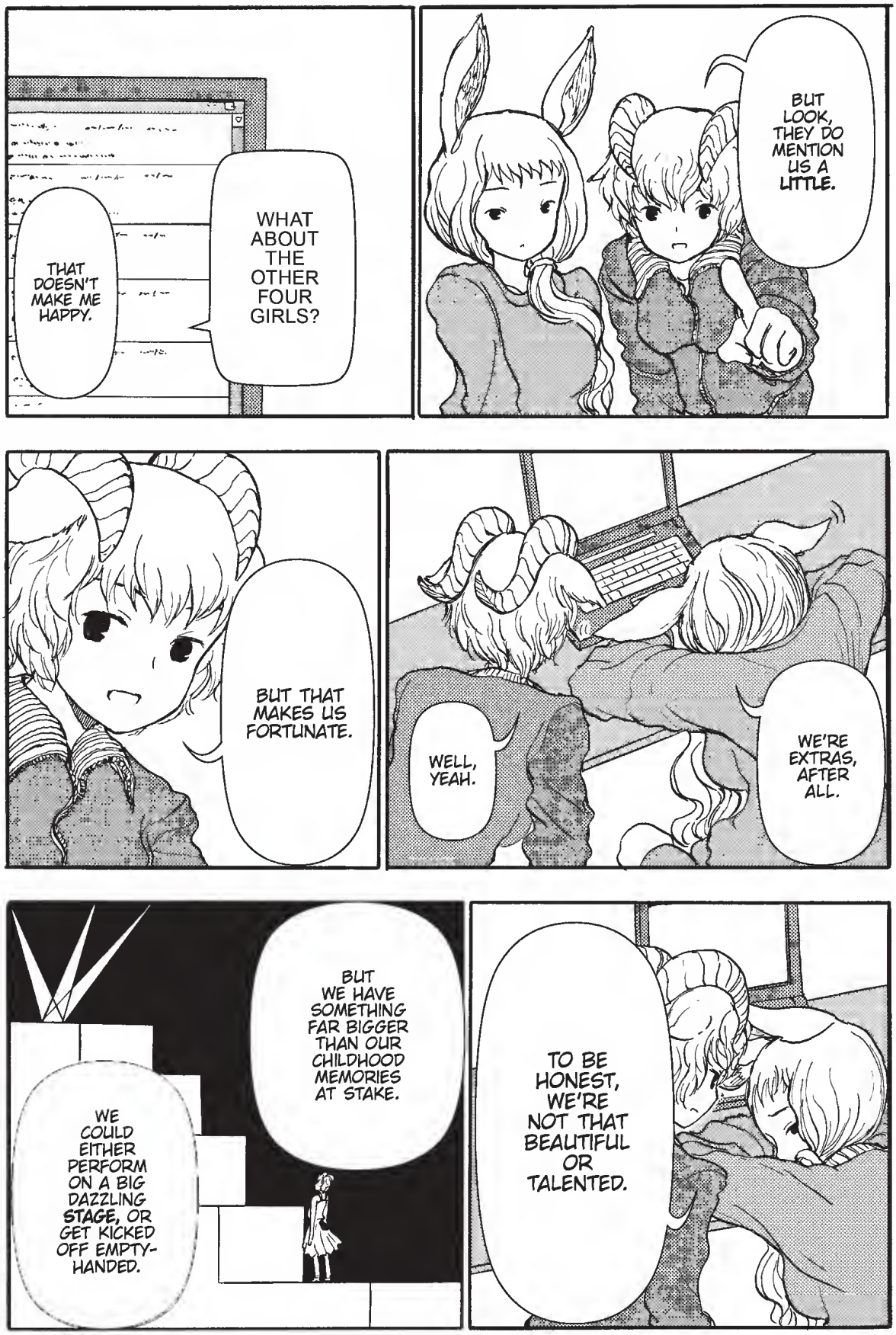

THAT ANTARC-TICAN IS AMAZING!
SHE'S GREAT!
SHE'S TOO GOOD TO PERFORM AT A SCHOOL FESTIVAL!
I REALLY LUCKED OUT!
I'M IMPRESS-ED WITH ANTARC-TICA!

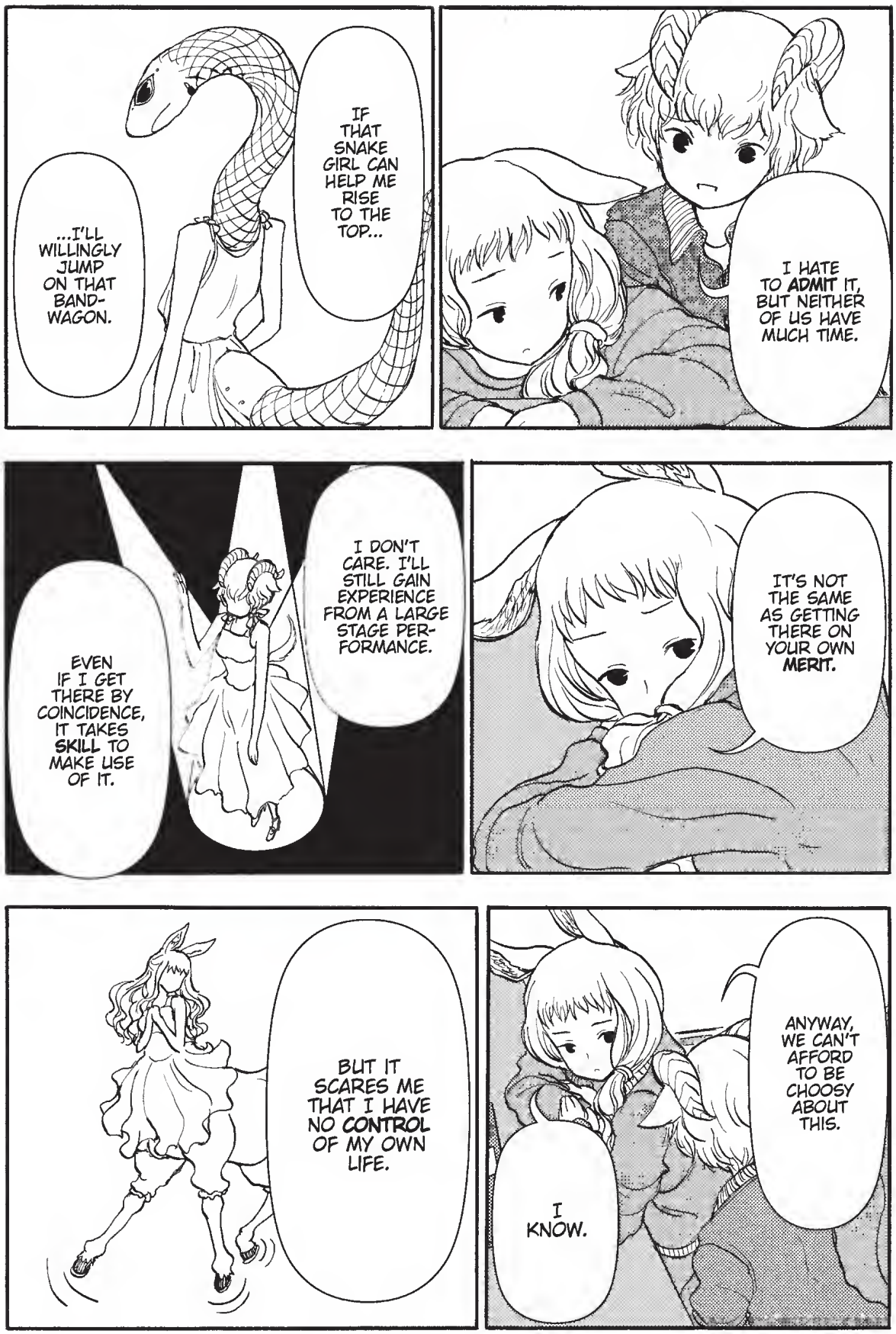

I'M POSTING ABOUT HER ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

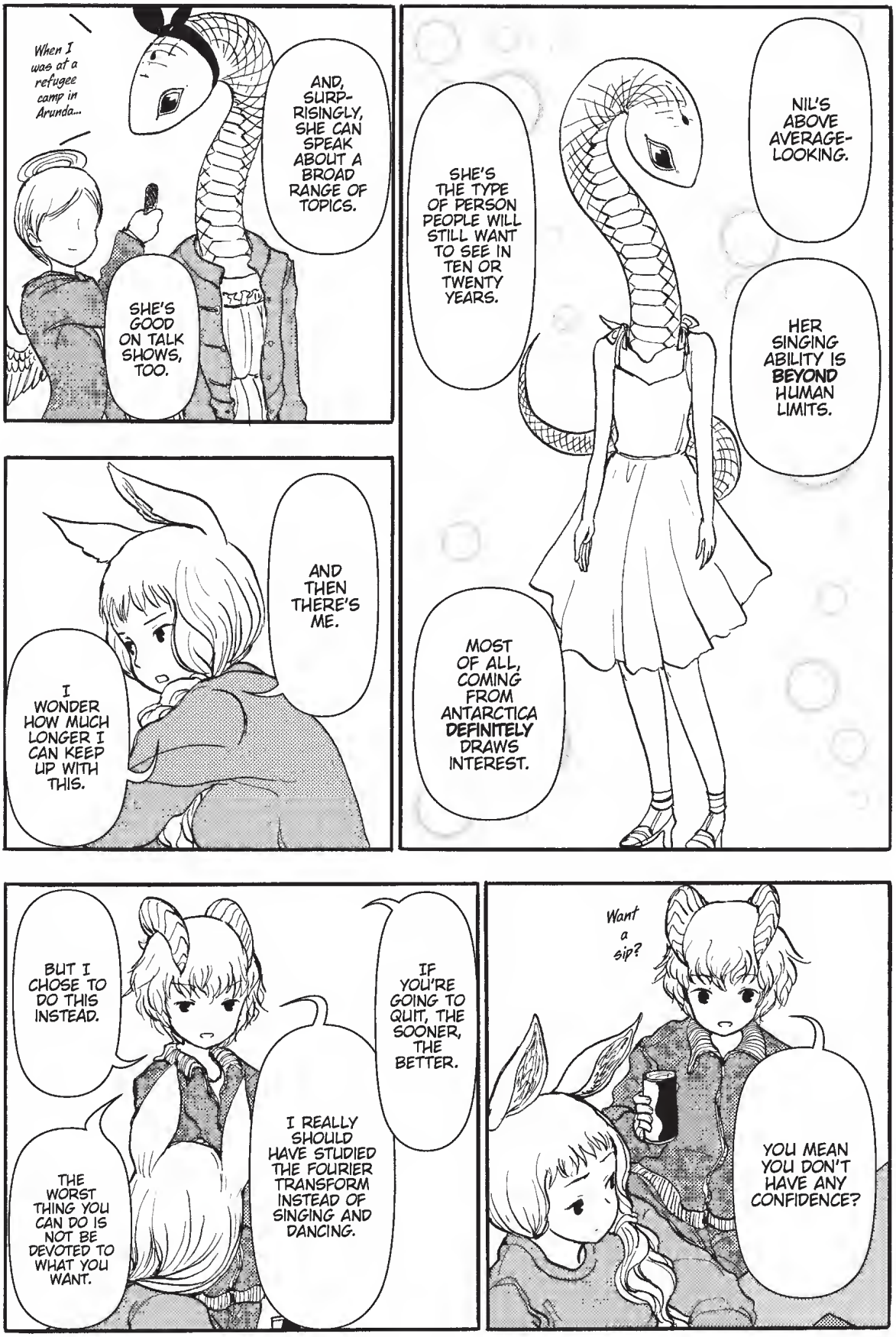

NFF!
BIG SISTER!
GLOMP
ID 102
Antarctic Girl Dressing Ro
I CAN TELL.
WE'RE AUTHO-RIZED STAFF.
Thank you.
YOU ALL LOOKED GREAT OUT THERE, TOO.
THANK YOU!
NIL-CHAN, THAT WAS A GREAT PERFOR-MANCE!
I THINK THOSE PEOPLE WOULD LOVE IT IF YOU WERE AN IDOL.
ZOOM

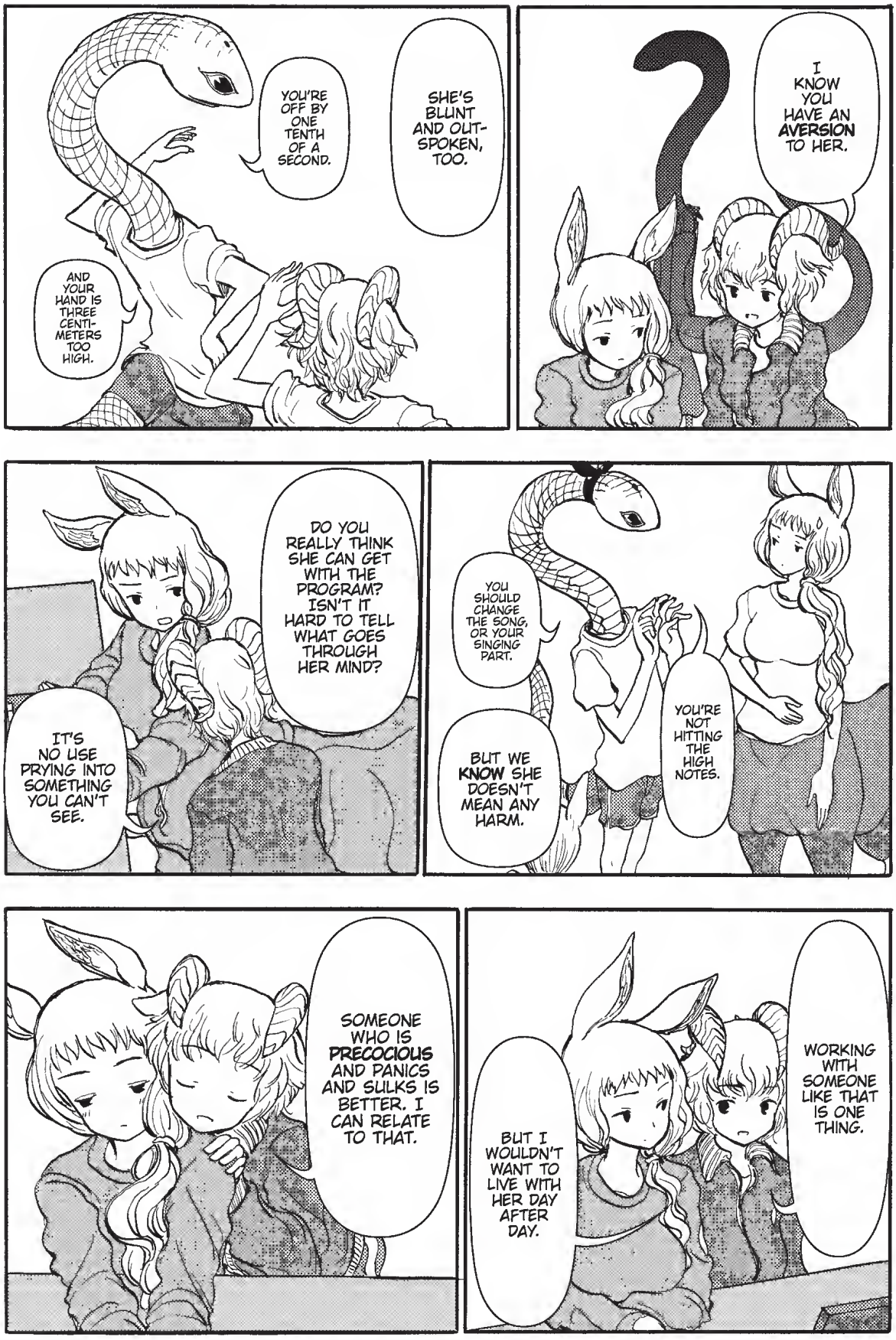

THAT'S A SHAME.
SINGING AND DANCING IN FRONT OF ALL THOSE PEOPLE...
OH, NO. I COULD NEVER DO THAT.
WHAT'S UP?
OH, MAN. THIS IS SO COOL.
SHE WAS IMPRESSED THAT I WAS DOING MY WORK.
Here
MY MOM SAW ME ON TV.

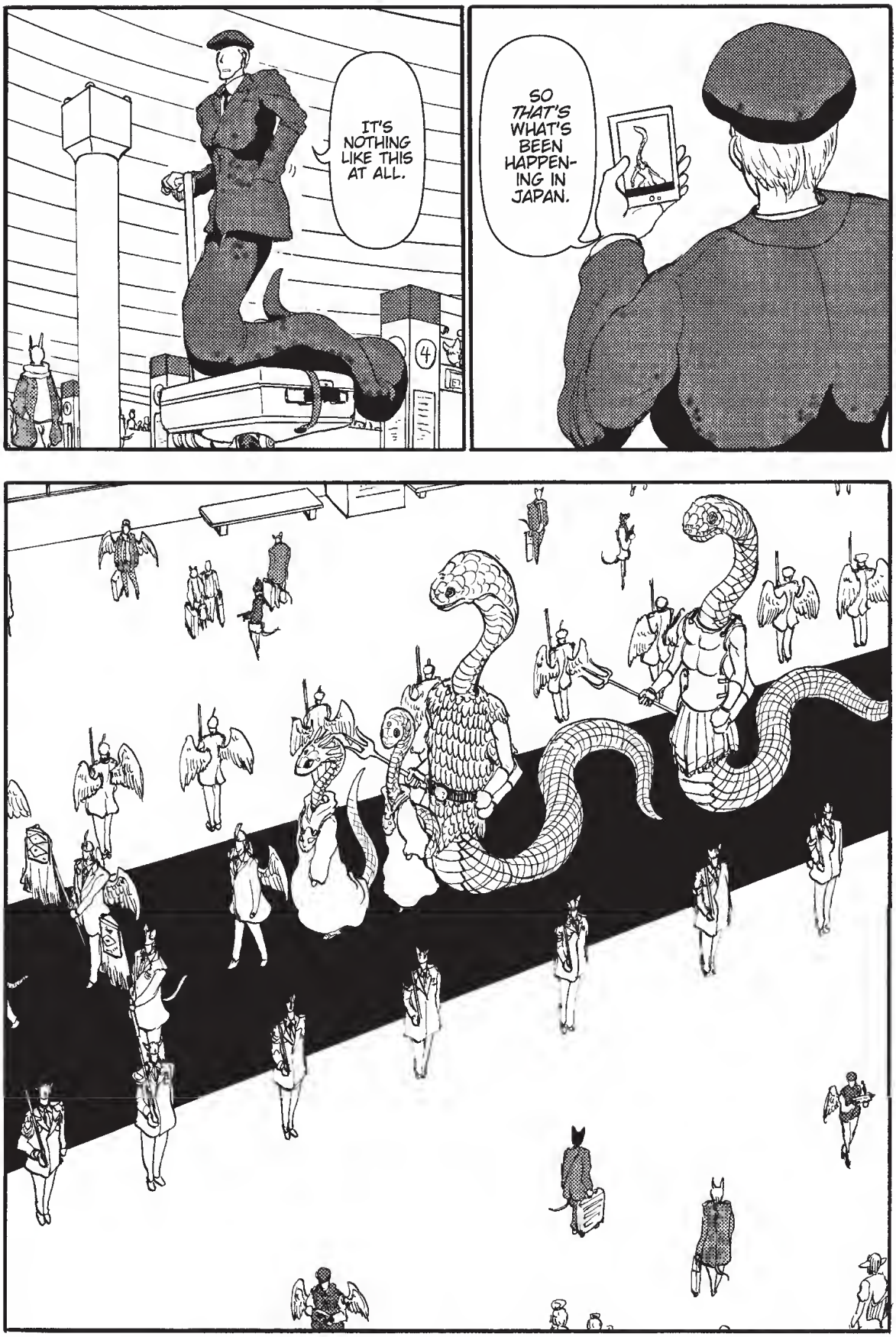

SO WHAT? IT'S A STEP FORWARD.
BETTER THAN NOTHING.
BUT YOU WERE ONLY IN THE CORNER OF THE SCREEN.
AND THAT WAS A FEATURE ON AN ANTARCT-ICAN, NOT A MUSIC PROGRAM.
WE WERE JUST EXTRAS TO THEM.
BUT YOU KNOW, NIL-NIL WAS ALL THEY TALKED ABOUT ONLINE.
SHE'S PRETTY GOOD AT DANCING, TOO.
BESIDES, SHE'S A GREAT SINGER.
WITH HER LOOKS, WHO WOULD NOTICE US?
WELL, IT CAN'T BE HELPED.


WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER FOUR GIRLS?
THAT DOESN'T MAKE ME HAPPY.
BUT LOOK, THEY DO MENTION US A LITTLE.
BUT THAT MAKES US FORTUNATE.
WELL, YEAH.
WE'RE EXTRAS, AFTER ALL.
BUT WE HAVE SOMETHING FAR BIGGER THAN OUR CHILDHOOD MEMORIES AT STAKE.
WE COULD EITHER PERFORM ON A BIG DAZZLING STAGE, OR GET KICKED OFF EMPTY-HANDED.
TO BE HONEST, WE'RE NOT THAT BEAUTIFUL OR TALENTED.

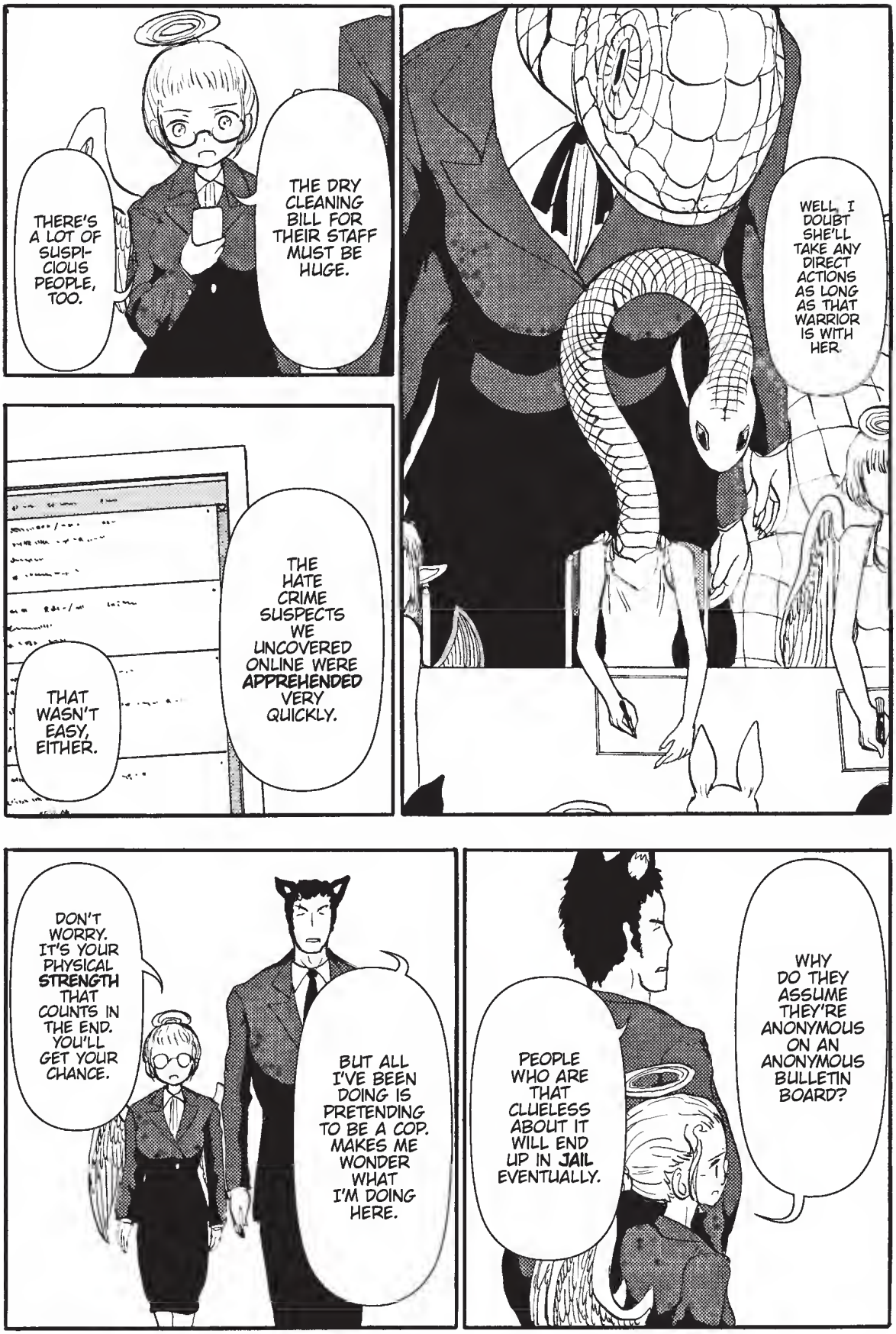

IF THAT SNAKE GIRL CAN HELP ME RISE TO THE TOP...
...I'LL WILLINGLY JUMP ON THAT BAND-WAGON.
I HATE TO ADMIT IT, BUT NEITHER OF US HAVE MUCH TIME.
I DON'T CARE. I'LL STILL GAIN EXPERIENCE FROM A LARGE STAGE PER-FORMANCE.
EVEN IF I GET THERE BY COINCIDENCE, IT TAKES SKILL TO MAKE USE OF IT.
IT'S NOT THE SAME AS GETTING THERE ON YOUR OWN MERIT.
BUT IT SCARES ME THAT I HAVE NO CONTROL OF MY OWN LIFE.
ANYWAY, WE CAN'T AFFORD TO BE CHOOSY ABOUT THIS.
I KNOW.

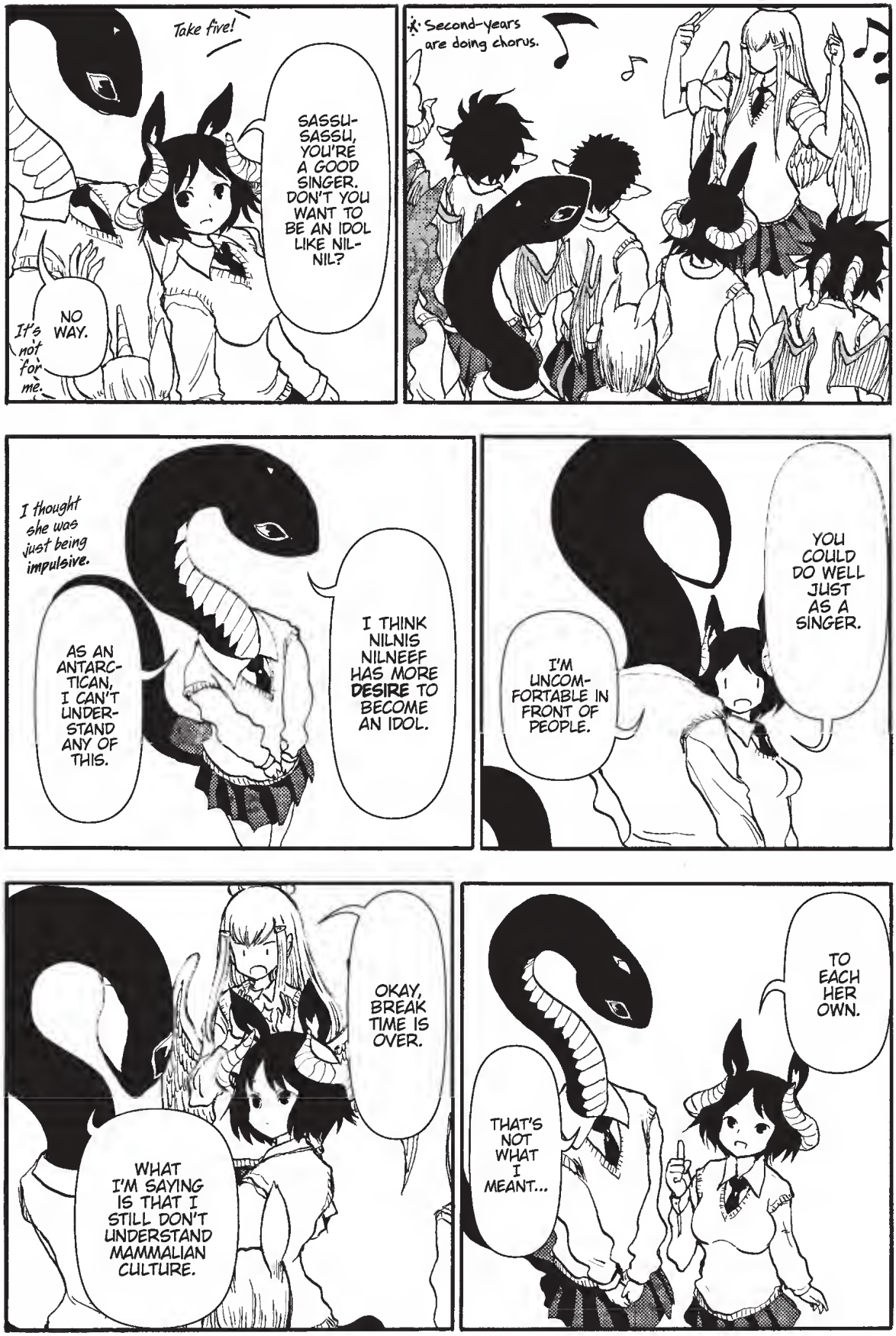

When I was at a refugee camp in Arunda...
AND, SURPRISINGLY, SHE CAN SPEAK ABOUT A BROAD RANGE OF TOPICS.
SHE'S GOOD ON TALK SHOWS, TOO.
NIL'S ABOVE AVERAGE-LOOKING.
SHE'S THE TYPE OF PERSON PEOPLE WILL STILL WANT TO SEE IN TEN OR TWENTY YEARS.
HER SINGING ABILITY IS **BEYOND** HUMAN LIMITS.
MOST OF ALL, COMING FROM ANTARCTICA **DEFINITELY** DRAWS INTEREST.
AND THEN THERE'S ME.
I WONDER HOW MUCH LONGER I CAN KEEP UP WITH THIS.
BUT I CHOSE TO DO THIS INSTEAD.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO QUIT, THE SOONER, THE BETTER.
I REALLY SHOULD HAVE STUDIED THE FOURIER TRANSFORM INSTEAD OF SINGING AND DANCING.
THE WORST THING YOU CAN DO IS NOT BE DEVOTED TO WHAT YOU WANT.
Want a sip?
YOU MEAN YOU DON'T HAVE ANY CONFIDENCE?


SHE'S BLUNT AND OUT-SPOKEN, TOO.
YOU'RE OFF BY ONE TENTH OF A SECOND.
AND YOUR HAND IS THREE CENTI-METERS TOO HIGH.
I KNOW YOU HAVE AN **AVERSION** TO HER.
DO YOU REALLY THINK SHE CAN GET WITH THE PROGRAM? ISN'T IT HARD TO TELL WHAT GOES THROUGH HER MIND?
IT'S NO USE PRYING INTO SOMETHING YOU CAN'T SEE.
YOU SHOULD CHANGE THE SONG, OR YOUR SINGING PART.
YOU'RE NOT HITTING THE HIGH NOTES.
BUT WE **KNOW** SHE DOESN'T MEAN ANY HARM.
SOMEONE WHO IS **PRECOCIOUS** AND PANICS AND SULKS IS BETTER. I CAN RELATE TO THAT.
WORKING WITH SOMEONE LIKE THAT IS ONE THING.
BUT I WOULDN'T WANT TO LIVE WITH HER DAY AFTER DAY.


IT'S NOTHING LIKE THIS AT ALL.
SO *THAT'S* WHAT'S BEEN HAPPEN-ING IN JAPAN.

NO PICTURES, PLEASE!
OH!
They could never be idols.
ANTARCTICANS ARE TREATED LIKE GODS IN THIS COUNTRY.
SQUEAK
SQUEAK
IT WOULD HELP IF SHE STAYED SOME-WHERE LOCAL.
THIS REALLY IS A PROB-LEM.
Antarctic Girl Signing


THERE'S A LOT OF SUSPI-CIOUS PEOPLE, TOO.
THE DRY CLEANING BILL FOR THEIR STAFF MUST BE HUGE.
WELL, I DOUBT SHE'LL TAKE ANY DIRECT ACTIONS AS LONG AS THAT WARRIOR IS WITH HER.
THAT WASN'T EASY, EITHER.
THE HATE CRIME SUSPECTS WE UNCOVERED ONLINE WERE APPREHENDED VERY QUICKLY.
DON'T WORRY. IT'S YOUR PHYSICAL STRENGTH THAT COUNTS IN THE END. YOU'LL GET YOUR CHANCE.
BUT ALL I'VE BEEN DOING IS PRETENDING TO BE A COP. MAKES ME WONDER WHAT I'M DOING HERE.
PEOPLE WHO ARE THAT CLUELESS ABOUT IT WILL END UP IN JAIL EVENTUALLY.
WHY DO THEY ASSUME THEY'RE ANONYMOUS ON AN ANONYMOUS BULLETIN BOARD?

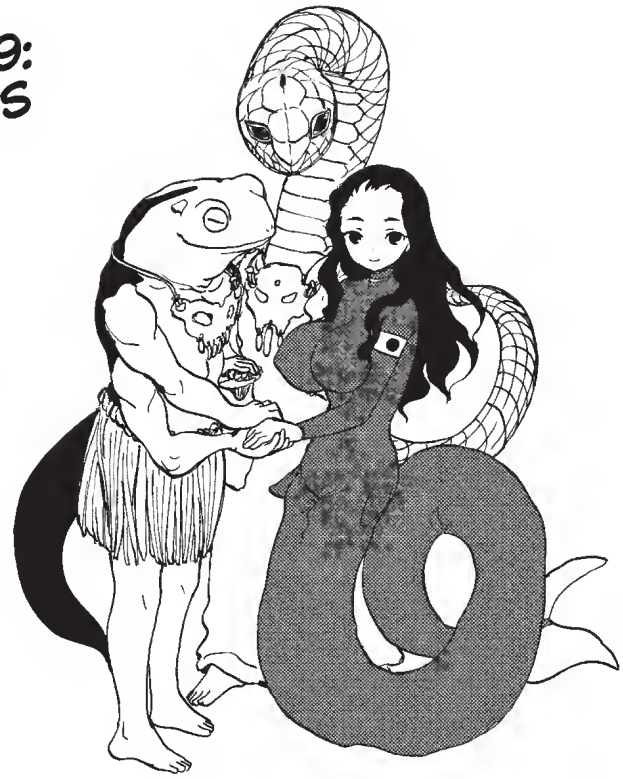

Take five!
SASSU-SASSU, YOU'RE A GOOD SINGER. DON'T YOU WANT TO BE AN IDOL LIKE NIL-NIL?
NO WAY.
It's not for me.
Second-years are doing chorus.
I THINK NILNIS NILNEEF HAS MORE DESIRE TO BECOME AN IDOL.
AS AN ANTARC-TICAN, I CAN'T UNDER-STAND ANY OF THIS.
I thought she was just being impulsive.
YOU COULD DO WELL JUST AS A SINGER.
I'M UNCOM-FORTABLE IN FRONT OF PEOPLE.
OKAY, BREAK TIME IS OVER.
WHAT I'M SAYING IS THAT I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND MAMMALIAN CULTURE.
TO EACH HER OWN.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT...

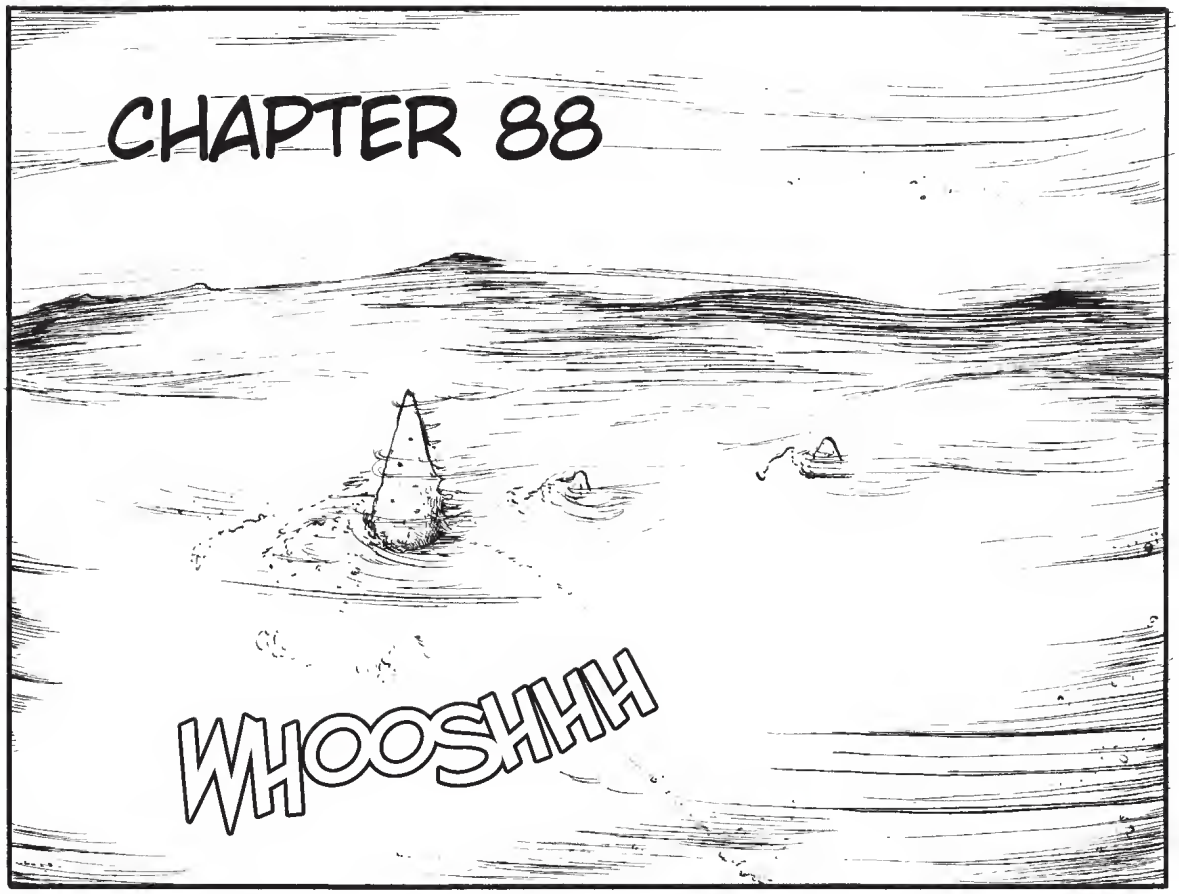
A CentaUr's Life

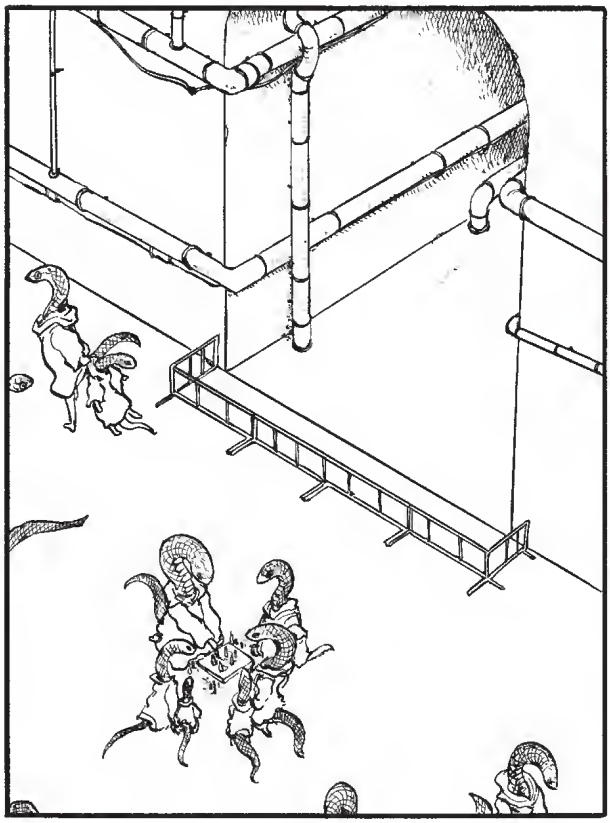
UNDERSTANDING AMPHIBIANFOLK PART 9: MULTIRACIAL SYMBIOSIS

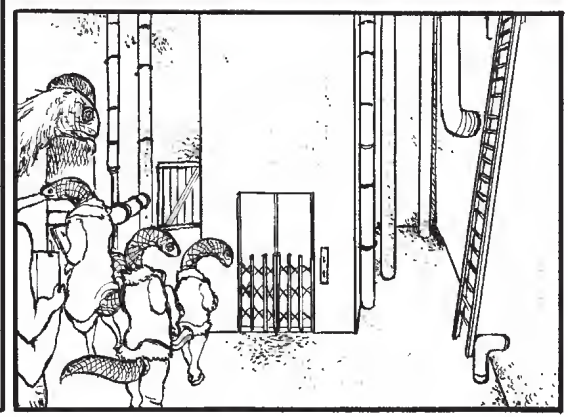
DESPITE BEING AN INTELLIGENT SPECIES, AMPHIBIANFOLK WERE FREQUENTLY TREATED AS BEASTS AND WERE THE TARGET OF GENOCIDE, ESPECIALLY BY THE RISING AGGRESSOR NATION. THIS TREATMENT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IS UNFORTUNATELY HISTORICALLY COMMON, AND MAY NOT BE CONSIDERED RACIAL DISCRIMINATION. THIS PERCEPTION CHANGED WHEN IT CAME TO LIGHT THAT PAST DISCRIMINATION AGAINST AMPHIBIANFOLK BASED UPON APPEARANCE, ETHNICITY AND RACE WAS LARGELY AN EXCUSE TO JUSTIFY STEALING RESOURCES AND USING AMPHIBIANFOLK AS SCAPEGOATS TO DISGUISE MISMANAGEMENT.

REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THEY ARE MAMMALIAN, ALL INTELLIGENT RACES SHOULD BE ENTITLED TO CIVIL RIGHTS. JAPAN, WITH ITS ANCIENT HISTORY OF COEXISTENCE--CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED BY THE FACT THAT MERFOLK, WHO ONCE LIVED IN COASTAL AREAS WORLDWIDE, CURRENTLY ONLY EXIST IN JAPAN--WAS REMISS IN NOT GRANTING RIGHTS TO AMPHIBIANFOLK EARLY ON. DISCRIMINATION MUST BE AVOIDED BY ANY MEANS AVAILABLE TO A PEACEFUL AND IDEAL NATION. TO BE SPECIFIC: A STRICTLY DEFENSIVE SECURITY POLICY AGAINST AMPHIBIANFOLK IS UNNECESSARY AND INAPPROPRIATE.

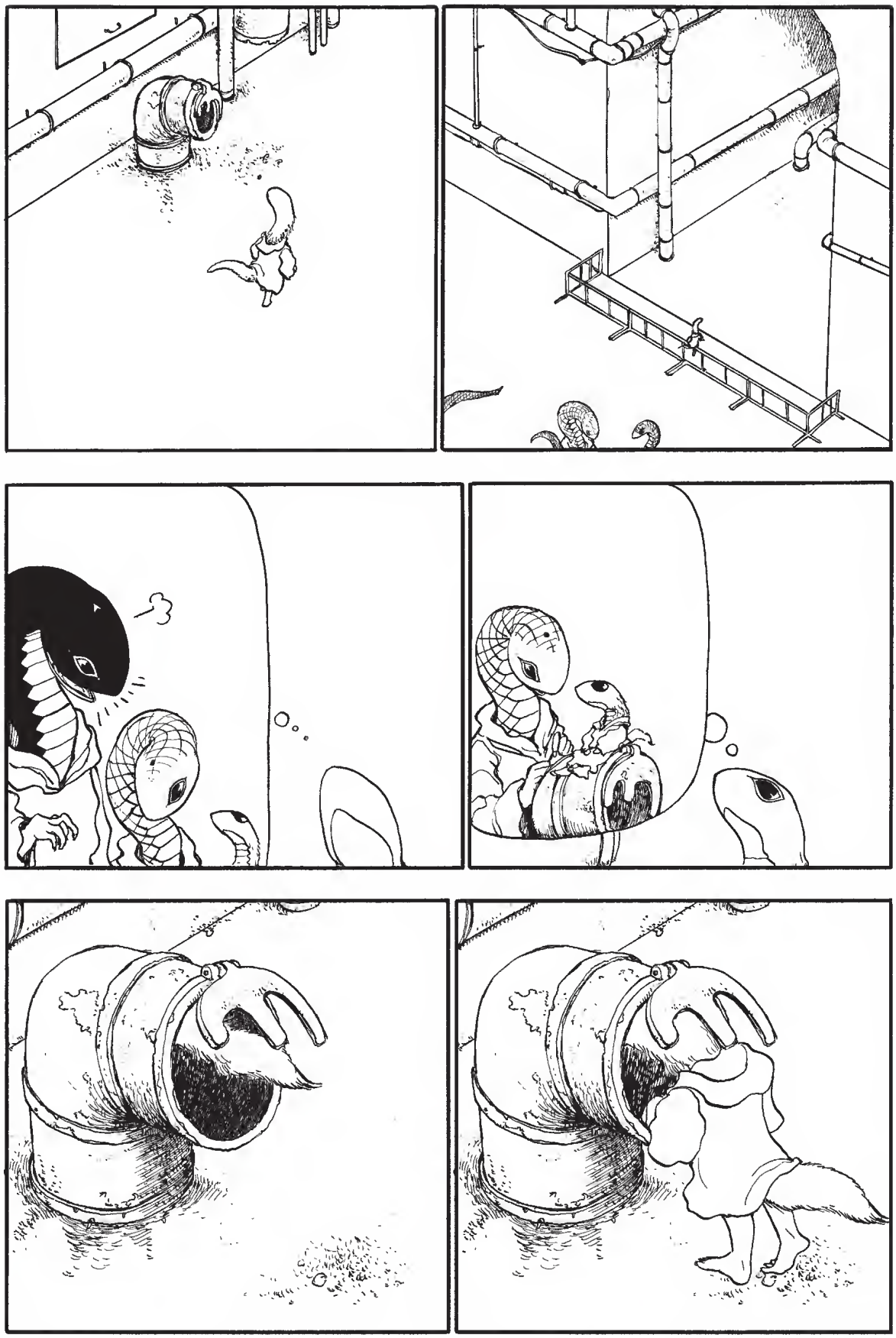



CHAPTER 88
WHOOSHHH

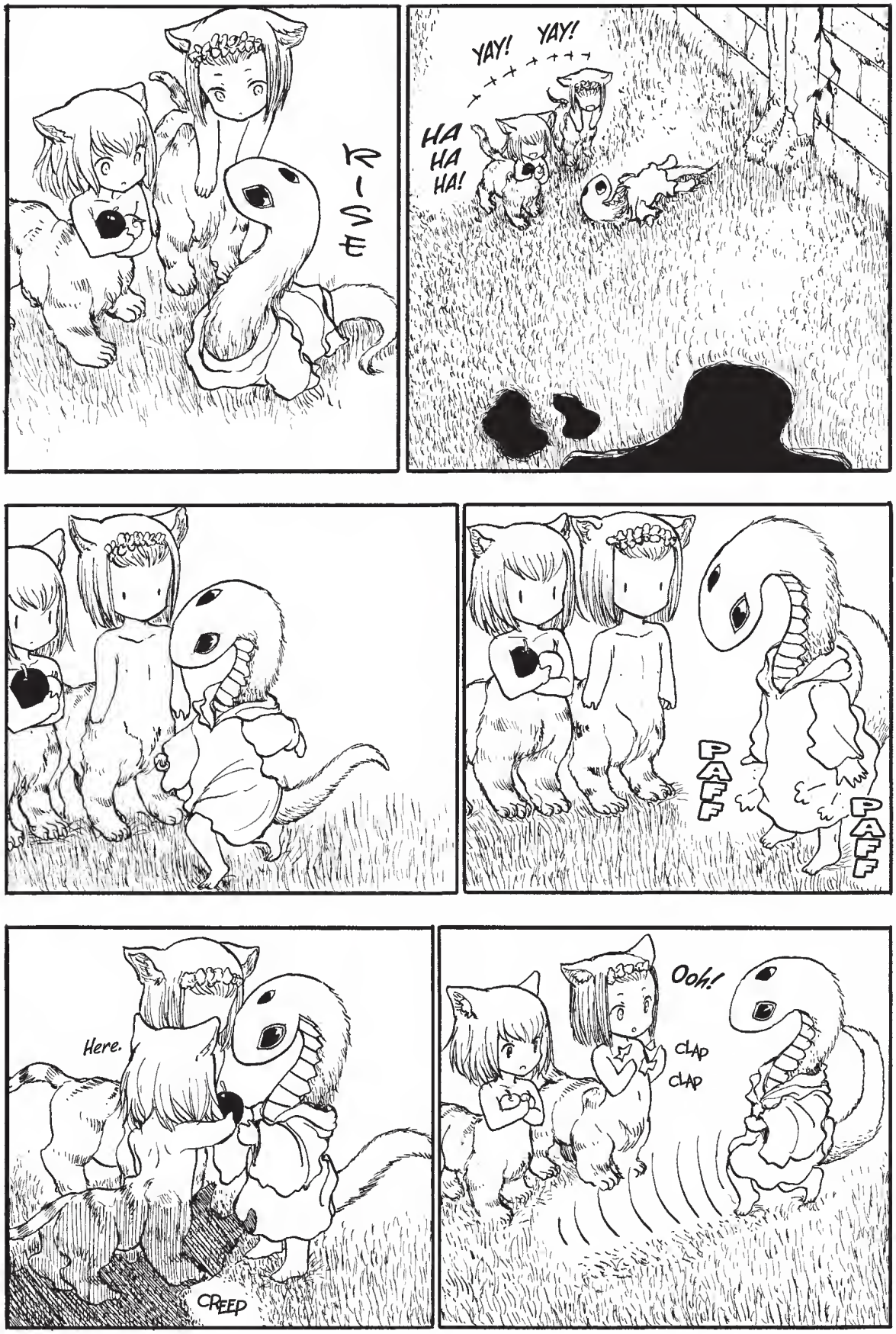


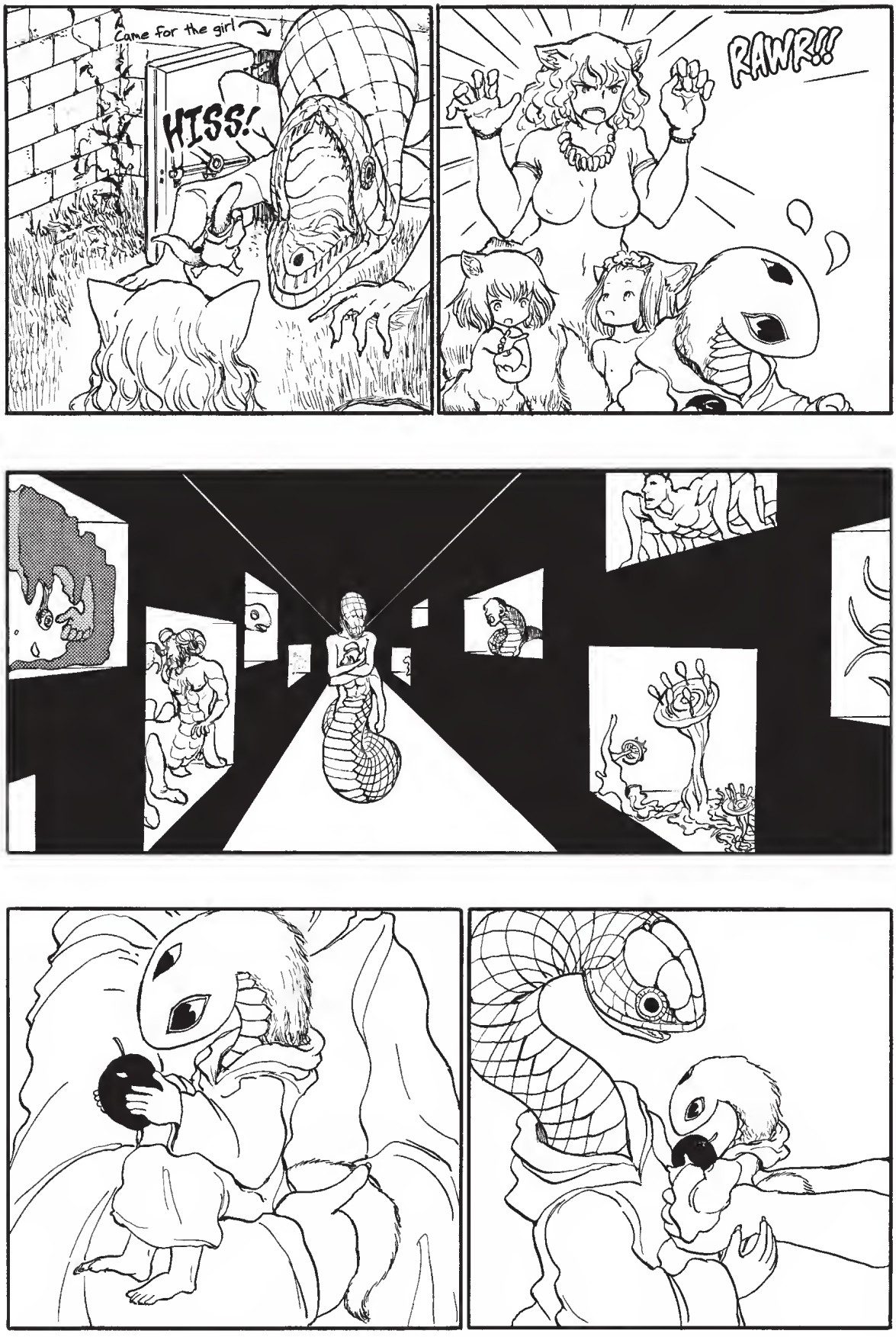


YAWN~
PAT
PAT
TUG
TUG
SNEAK

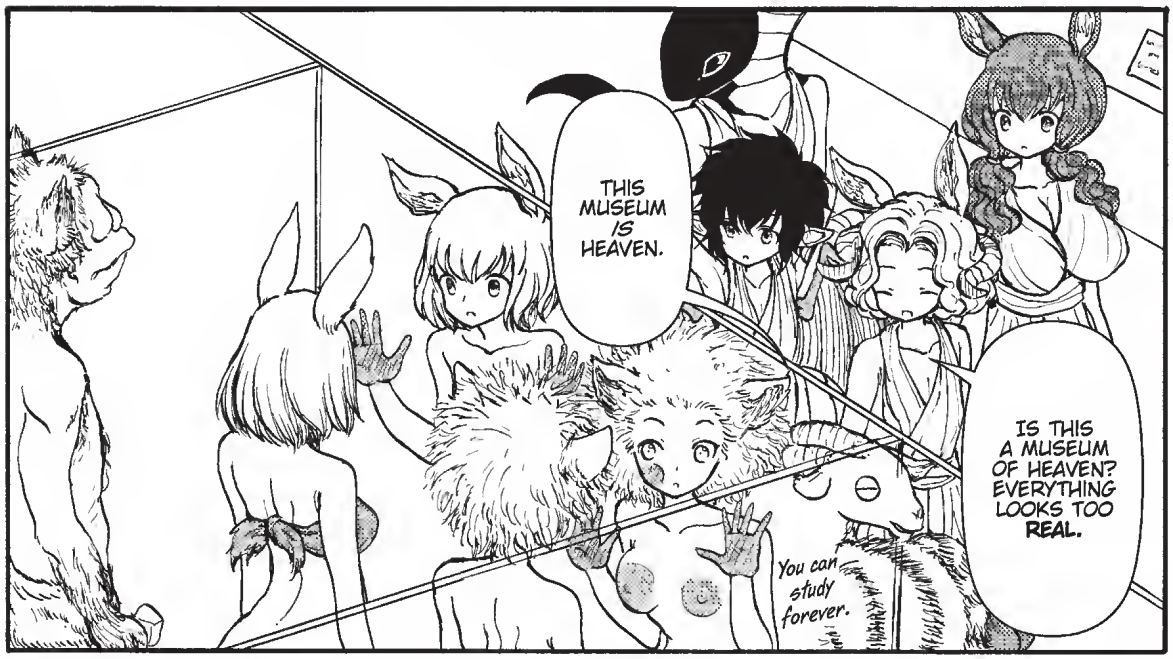


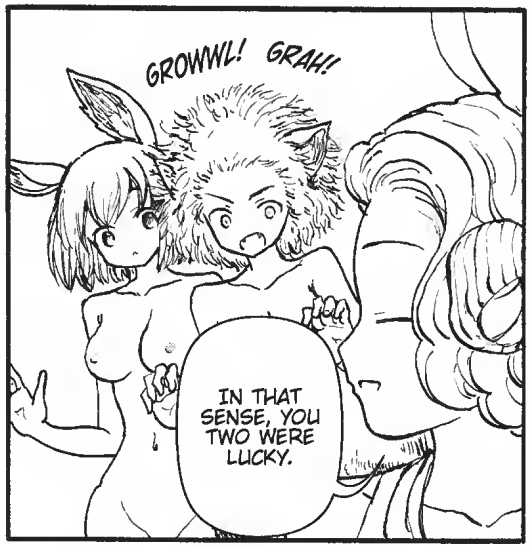
SMACK
TWIRL
WUMP

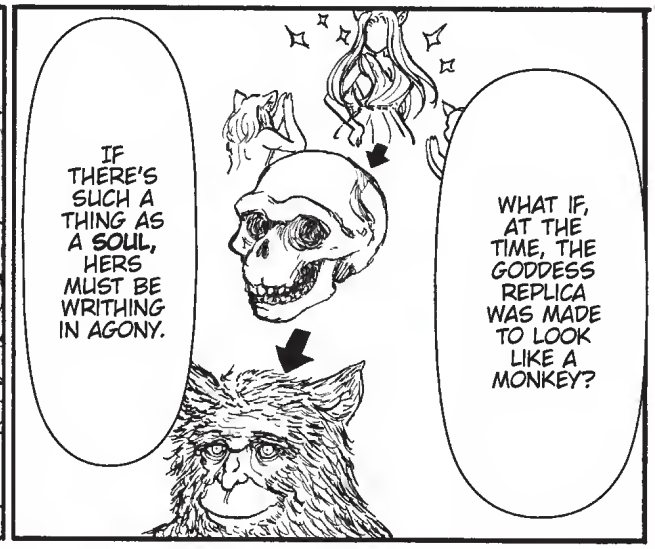

キーシェ
YAY!
YAY!
HA
HA
HA!
PAFF
PAFF
Here.
CREEP
Ooh!
CLAP
CLAP

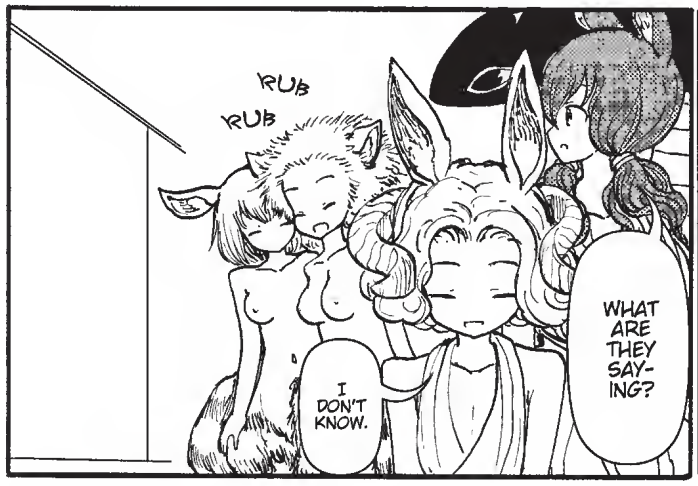

Came for the girl
HISS!
RAWR!!

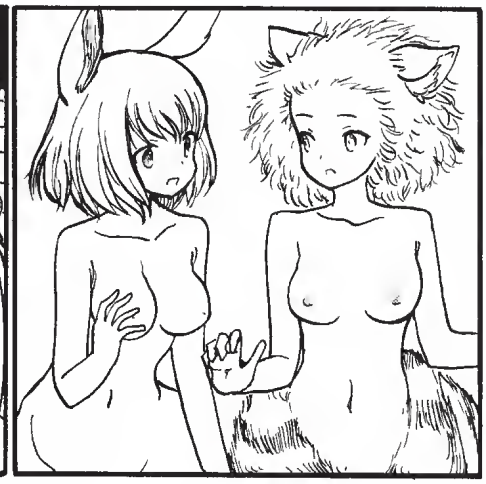
A CentaUr's Life


THIS MUSEUM IS HEAVEN.
IS THIS A MUSEUM OF HEAVEN? EVERYTHING LOOKS TOO REAL.
You can study forever.


GROWWL! GRAH!
IN THAT SENSE, YOU TWO WERE LUCKY.


IF THERE'S SUCH A THING AS A SOUL, HERS MUST BE WRITHING IN AGONY.
WHAT IF, AT THE TIME, THE GODDESS REPLICA WAS MADE TO LOOK LIKE A MONKEY?


RUB
RUB
I DON'T KNOW.
WHAT ARE THEY SAY-ING?



NO, THAT'S NOT HOW IT WORKS.
GOD CAN PROBABLY CREATE ANYTHING HE WANTS IN HERE.
WITHOUT CONNECTING TO ANTARCTICA, I'D NEED MORE INFORMATION TO ATTEMPT TRANSLATION.
DO YOU KNOW?
EVEN A TOTALLY CONTROLLED WRITER COULD ONLY PARTIALLY SOLVE AND COPY A SIMULTANEOUS POLYNOMIAL EQUATION.
GOD CAN GIVE YOU ALL THE RELATIONAL EQUATIONS YOU LIKE, BUT NOT AS MANY ANSWERS.
X+Y=3 AND 2X+Y=4. THERE'S ONLY ONE ANSWER TO THESE EQUATIONS.
THAT'S WHY IT'S MEANINGLESS TO FEEL PITY FOR THOSE WHO DIE SO YOUNG.
YOU EXIST IN YOUR OWN PRINCIPLE.
WHAT I MEAN IS THAT IT'S YOUR ONE AND ONLY LIFE.

THE *BAKYUU SUKEGOU* RIOT AND THE WEAKENING OF THE FEUDAL SYSTEM

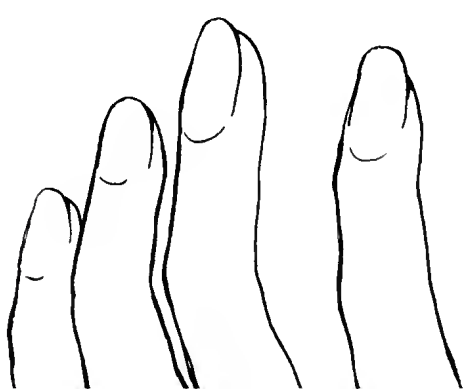
As described in the last volume, the *sukegou* system required villages near highways to supply men and horses for official communication and travel. As time went on, however, a growing number of villages opted to pay the tax penalty rather than send men. This resulted in an increase in freight dispatchers, some of whom colluded with station officers to commit fraud--for while it's difficult to hide labor, it's much easier to manipulate the books. The increasing burden and corruption of the *sukegou* system would eventually push the peasants too far, and they would rise up in a rebellion known as the *Bakyuu Sukegou* Riot.

Southern Hidachi, which included the area where Kanata City stands today, was close enough to Edo that it was granted to a *hatamoto,* a smaller *daimyo* with an income level around 10,000 *koku,* or another small-scale *daimyo* in a nearby domain.

With militaries only large enough to defend the borders, the forces were inadequate to quell unlawful peasant rallies and uprisings. Indeed, most of the direct governance of the populace was handled by individual villages. Villages were the foundation of feudal politics (the *bakuhan* system), autonomous and administered by village officials chosen from the village elites. These officials were responsible for most aspects of government, including tax collection. This practice of government by the peasants themselves led to the spread of literacy, higher education levels, and even martial arts skills, pushing samurai increasingly lower in the elite social stratum.

Given that the peasants were already discontented by the burden of the *sukegou* system, officials chose to conceal fraud and corruption from the public to avoid further inflaming the situation. The strategy worked, for a time, but this changed when an official came to investigate a fraud accusation by a freight dispatcher named Wadachi. Thinking to protect himself, Wadachi betrayed his partner in crime Gonzaemon, the *kumi* head of Ami village. The village elites were incensed to learn of this corruption, and feeling that the people should know, they called the village together for a secret meeting. The ensuing uproar led to the destruction of the homes of Wadachi, Gonzaemon, and Asaya Jizamon (the village official). The incident was taken very seriously by the government; a group of samurai were quickly dispatched to restore order, but they arrived to find that the peasants had already peacefully disbanded.

The government response was swift and extreme. The corrupt freight dispatcher Wadachi was cleared and released for his cooperation in identifying the individuals who coordinated the riot, despite the clear evidence of his fraud. The three peasants who were believed to be the masterminds were 'executed'--they were actually killed in prison prior to their sentencing--and the other villagers were ordered to pay fines. This much was not atypical punishment for such incidents, but there was more: the Kanhasshuu Disciplinary Police Agency, a civil peacekeeping force, was called in as a precautionary measure, with the village leadership placed under their authority. This event is now seen as a clear indicator that the political system was failing.



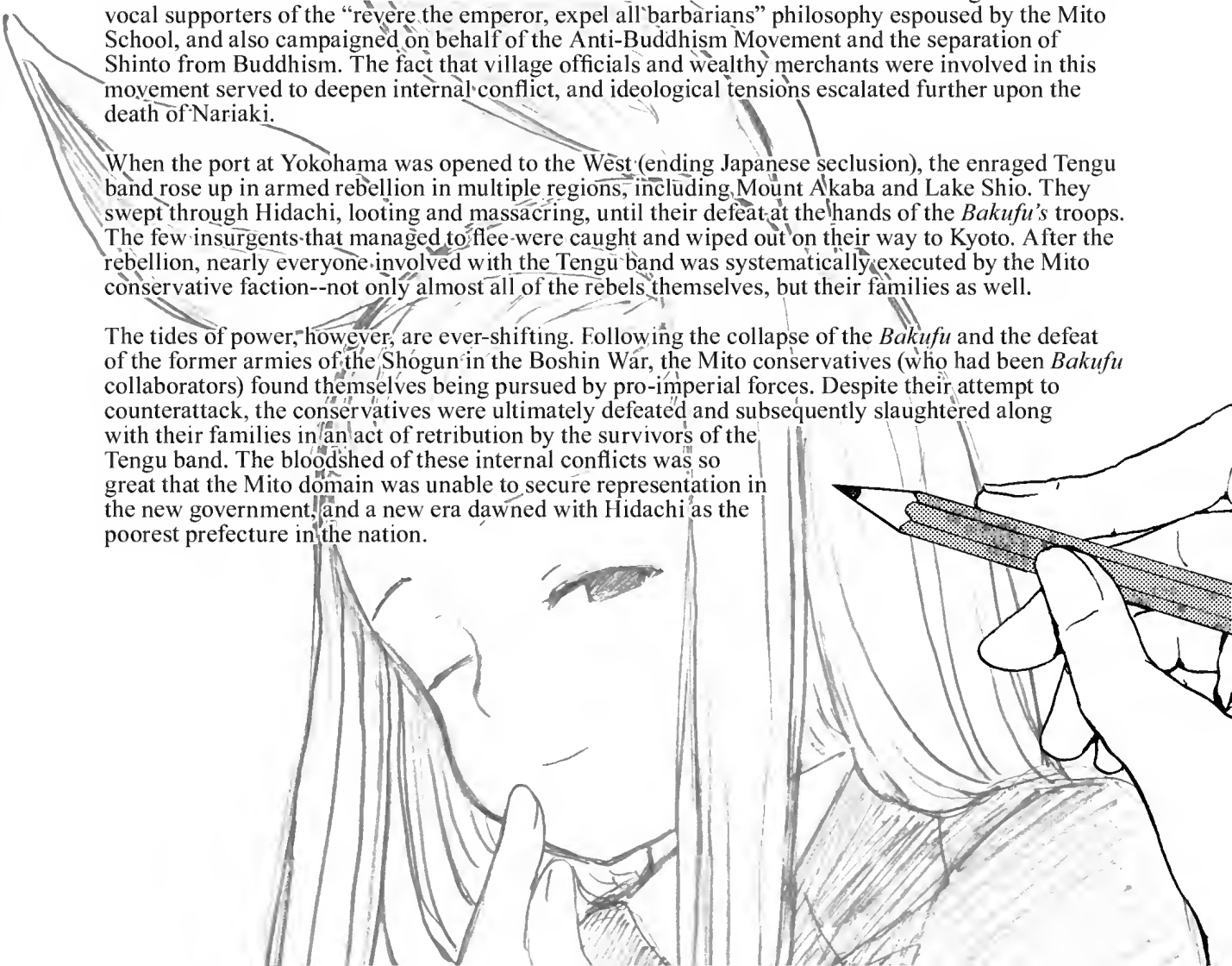
THE UPRISING OF THE TENGU BAND AT MOUNT AKABA AND THE FALL OF THE *BAKUFU*

At this time, Hidachi was the domain of the Mito branch of the Shogun's family, and there was a heated succession dispute underway due to an ideological schism; though they could not know it at the time, this schism played a major role in the collapse of the *Bakufu.* The two factions involved were the Mito conservatives, who were political allies of the *Bakufu,* and a group that came to be known as the Tengu band, whose pro-Imperial, xenophobic beliefs were the theoretical foundation for a movement that led to the downfall of the feudal government. This time period was also complicated by the active intrusion of the West into Asia, and although Japan sought trade with the West, the nation's relatively weak defensive forces fueled deep concerns about the threat of foreign invasion.

The succession dispute was resolved when a man named Nariaki prevailed against the pro-*Bakufu* Mito conservatives and came into power with the endorsement of a group of samurai reformists. With an eye toward improving defense, Nariaki implemented various reforms in the domain, including organizing the non-conservative faction, training peasant soldiers, and building regional schools to educate non-samurai. The reformists who would become known as the Tengu band were vocal supporters of the "revere the emperor, expel all barbarians" philosophy espoused by the Mito School, and also campaigned on behalf of the Anti-Buddhism Movement and the separation of Shinto from Buddhism. The fact that village officials and wealthy merchants were involved in this movement served to deepen internal conflict, and ideological tensions escalated further upon the death of Nariaki.

When the port at Yokohama was opened to the West (ending Japanese seclusion), the enraged Tengu band rose up in armed rebellion in multiple regions, including Mount Akaba and Lake Shio. They swept through Hidachi, looting and massacring, until their defeat at the hands of the *Bakufu's* troops. The few insurgents that managed to flee were caught and wiped out on their way to Kyoto. After the rebellion, nearly everyone involved with the Tengu band was systematically executed by the Mito conservative faction--not only almost all of the rebels themselves, but their families as well.

The tides of power, however, are ever-shifting. Following the collapse of the *Bakufu* and the defeat of the former armies of the Shogun in the Boshin War, the Mito conservatives (who had been *Bakufu* collaborators) found themselves being pursued by pro-imperial forces. Despite their attempt to counterattack, the conservatives were ultimately defeated and subsequently slaughtered along with their families in an act of retribution by the survivors of the Tengu band. The bloodshed of these internal conflicts was so great that the Mito domain was unable to secure representation in the new government, and a new era dawned with Hidachi as the poorest prefecture in the nation.



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Elina Ishikawa

ADAPTATION
Holly Kolodziejczak

LETTERING AND RETOUCH
Jennifer Skarupa

LOGO DESIGN
Courtney Williams

COVER DESIGN
Nicky Lim

PROOFREADER
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ASSISTANT EDITOR
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CK Russell

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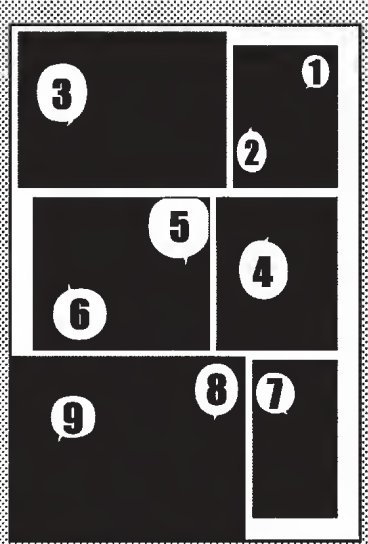

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